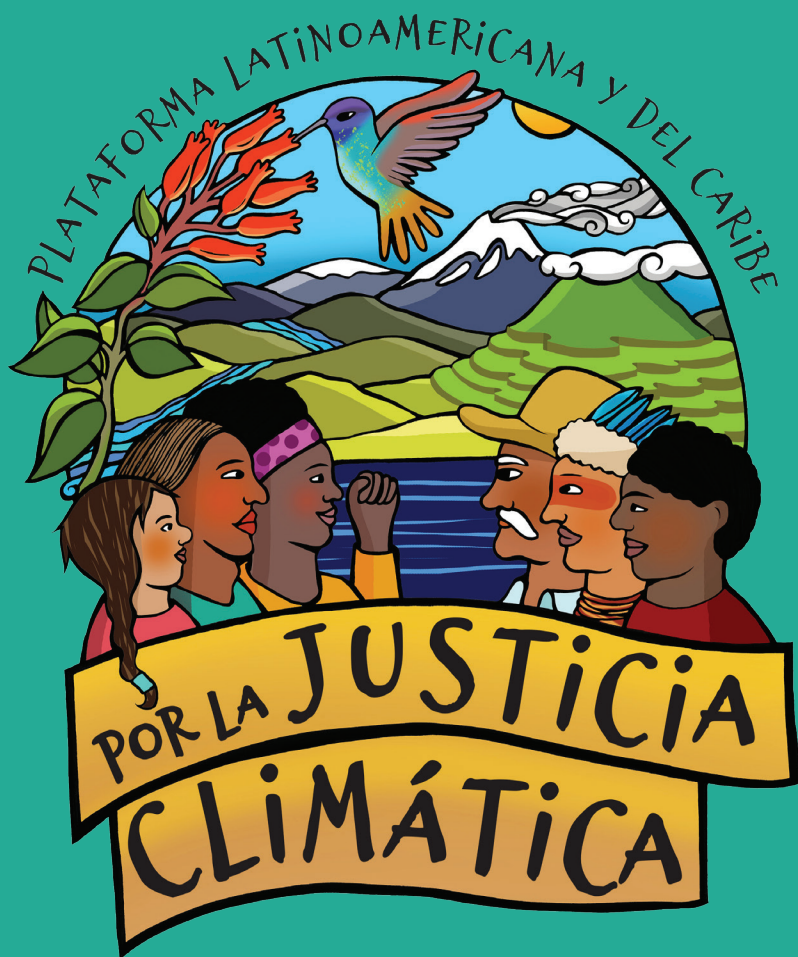


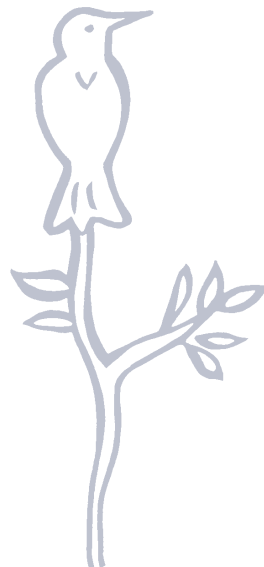
# GLOSSARY

## FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE



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# INTRODUCTION

In recent years, climate change has become an inescapable topic of discussion among national and multinational entities in the public and private sectors. They have developed cohesive rhetoric to persuade a society—increasingly affected by the impacts of the climate crisis—that they are acting decisively to address this situation.

This rhetoric is obscure for those unfamiliar with scientific language or the inner workings of international negotiations. And it is based on technical terminology that often serves to confuse the layperson's understanding of the issue—and therefore, of how best to address it.

In climate negotiations, the approach has been to reduce the problem: from the socioeconomic model that governs life on the planet, to a simple matter of molecules in the atmosphere. In other words, the focus is on the consequences of civilization's crisis instead of its roots. Confronting the climate crisis is a complex situation where many varied interests, dynamics, factors, and actors converge. Using this excuse, a hyper-specialized lexicon has arisen to obfuscate the possibilities of collective action for the urgent transformations the current moment demands.

To aid understanding and concrete action-taking by communities and organizations, the **Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Climate Justice** has prepared this Climate Justice Glossary now in your hands. This Glossary is divided into five sections relating to i) Climate justice: how social movements worldwide have developed their own narrative about the crisis in the face of institutional narratives; ii) False solutions: the tools and mechanisms that serve to distract from what we really need to transform the climate crisis; iii) Climate change jargon: the technical terminology mentioned above; iv) Strategies of corporations and states: how big polluters seek to evade their responsibilities and keep polluting using false solutions; and v) Peoples' proposals and solutions: to build collective hope.

We are aware that this first effort is not exhaustive. But through it, we seek to broaden our viewpoints, contribute to unmasking false solutions, and, above all, understand and amplify proposals for climate justice.

1

# CLIMATE JUSTICE



## Climate collapse / climate crisis

The climate has always changed. However, modern anthropogenic activity, rooted in fossil-fuel-based energy consumption, has caused the collapse of the Earth's system—leading to sudden, accelerated, and unforeseen changes in the climate due to global warming.

This notion of collapse/crisis refers to the unsustainability of human and nonhuman life on Earth due to the dominant patriarchal, racist, anthropocentric, androcentric, speciesist and colonial organization of modern social structures, to the detriment of biodiversity, water, soil, and other elements of nature. In recent years, this has accelerated and affected ecological cycles, leading to changes in ecosystems—some irreversible.

These multiple, linked crises—economic, health, political, and care, among many others—heighten the need for an approach to life that reorganizes, regenerates, repairs, and heals the bonds between humanity and Nature to halt the collapse.

## Ecological Debt and Climate Debt

Ecological debt is the debt countries of the North owe the people and countries of the South. It is the North's duty to our planet, for its gradual destruction through production and consumption systems. This debt can be traced back to colonial times and continues growing to this day.

Acts of plundering, usufruct, destruction, devastation (oil and mining extractivism of forests and biodiversity), and pollution of Nature form part of this debt. It also includes unfair ecological exchange: that is, goods for export—primarily raw materials—are produced without regard for social and environmental damage such as intellectual property theft and usufruct linked to ancestral knowledge of seeds and plants; the use and degradation of land, soil, water, and air for monoculture; rubbish and toxic waste dumping in “Third World” countries; and other effects of global and industrial capitalism. As a result, local communities' food sovereignty, ways of life, and livelihoods are in jeopardy.

Climate debt is part of ecological debt. In essence, climate debt refers to illegitimate appropriation of the atmosphere and the Earth's capacity to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from disproportionate fossil fuel extraction and combustion. Air pollution is the primary cause of the greenhouse effect and the resulting climate crisis, which affects the most vulnerable peoples of the South.

## Environmental Racism

Although every person is affected by extreme climate events, not every individual has the ability to face and overcome them with the same ease.

Historically exploited nations, discriminated against and excluded by socio-economic structures favoring a small number of elites (generally white people), have been shown to be excessively vulnerable as they are obliged to live in high-risk areas and have fewer financial resources. At the same time, disaster aid and disaster recovery policies are unevenly distributed, benefiting rich white communities over Black, Indigenous, peasant, and worker communities, among others. Environmental racism exposes and perpetuates the legacy of colonialism.

## Global South / Global North

The term “Global South” is becoming increasingly common. Yet it is often used in a contradictory and confusing manner. For example, it is sometimes used exclusively to refer to the south geographically or to replace the term “developing countries.” Other times, it alludes to the most vulnerable communities, regardless of their geography. Therefore, it is important to develop a definition that helps build the narrative for systemic change.

There is the risk that the term itself may be used to blur and obscure inequalities and injustices within the countries of the Global South. The concept cannot allude to oligarchs, businesspeople, landowners, managers, and representatives of transnational corporations from “Southern” or “developing” countries.

Therefore, “Global South” should refer to a) local communities, Indigenous groups, peasants, and territorial organizations that are victims of the impacts of capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, structural violence, and extractivist development policy; and b) vulnerable populations displaced, sacrificed, polluted, politically persecuted, intimidated, and threatened by corporations, the financial system, and States. Therefore, this definition encompasses Global South communities in the U.S. and Europe that experience these conditions as well.

On the other hand, “Global North” should refer to States, territorial border institutions, corporations, elites, oligarchic agribusinesses, and financial institutions as well as individuals and entities that facilitate and/or profit from the exploitation, plundering, and hoarding of wealth. Therefore, this definition encompasses Global North entities in southern countries.

## Historical Responsibility / Responsibility of Big Polluters

A handful of entities undoubtedly hold historical responsibility for the climate crisis. Discussions in multilateral negotiations on this topic have centered solely on the responsibilities of States, focusing on the historical responsibility of the most developed countries. The U.S. leads this list, followed by Europe and other industrialized nations. These countries have exploited fossil fuels to develop their industry, establish colonial relations, control resource access, and generate profit.

However, to avoid oversimplifying, this analysis must also consider inequalities and inequities within each State. Thus, discussion of historical responsibility must consider the enormous profits that public and private transnational corporations, oligarchies, and financial elites have enjoyed, as well as the responsibility of political actors and decision-makers who have allowed and concealed dispossession, destruction of Nature, and violations of rights, building a system of impunity. At the same time, climate debt must not be ascribed to Indigenous communities, workers, or dispossessed migrants. And there are elites in the South whose imperialist stance contributes to global warming.

## Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and Climate Refugees

More and more people are being forced to migrate due to disasters or sudden climate change. People displaced within their country (internally displaced people, or IDPs), people displaced externally (refugees), and stateless people (those without citizenship in any country) are growing in number.

All around the globe, people are experiencing the effects of the climate crisis (like monsoons, landslides, drought, flooding, and hurricanes). But the impacts are disproportionate in vulnerable countries, countries in conflict, or countries where big polluters hold important ecological or social debts. These countries require greater support.

In situations of vulnerability, displacement, and forced migration, elders, women, and children are most affected.

## Just Transition For and By the People

Just transition is an ever-changing and disputed concept, taking different forms from its origins in worker unions to the present. Many multilateral organizations, corporations, and States have begun to use the term demagogically to disguise false solutions or justify the continuation of a development model that is leading us inexorably toward ecological collapse. Just transition must not be confused with “the right to development” or used to avoid a profound transformation of society and the economy.

From a climate justice perspective, a just transition must center protection of and justice for Nature and for communities and peoples historically affected by the violent politics of extractivist development. Just transition is the path we take toward profound systemic change for and by people and Nature.

## Systemic Change

The overwhelming evidence of the impact of climate change confirms the structural causes of the climate crisis beyond doubt. Capitalism— as an economic and organizational system, global and institutionalized, that seeks economic growth and wealth concentration as its only objective—is destroying life on Earth.

If we are to address the structural causes of climate change, we must seek systemic change. Though we may not yet clearly see the details of what this means, we know we need a transition that restructures our models of social organization and restores harmony with Nature, while advancing social justice and equity.

Such systemic change must eradicate capitalism and its power relations, as well as extractivism, patriarchy, racism, colonialism, speciesism, and classism. It must put the common, the collective, the communal, care, and webs of life at the core of socio-economic organization, distributing wealth equally, consuming only what’s necessary, and providing a fulfilling life—especially to those historically marginalized, displaced, and impacted by the system of wealth accumulation. This new model must respect the human rights of Indigenous and ancestral communities, women, peasants, and workers, as well as the rights of Nature.



# 2

## FALSE SOLUTIONS



## Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS)

BECCS consists of first producing energy by means of burning biomass at a large scale, and then, with the help of industrial machinery, eliminating the excess CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.

This proposal also includes the promotion of other artificial technology: carbon capture and storage, which seeks to use huge devices to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and reinject it in carbon sinks such as soil and the ocean (see Geoengineering). This process is another tool proposed by corporations in their so-called fight against global warming.

For organizations that promote climate justice, BECCS is a risky, invalid, costly, and dangerous distraction that diverts attention from the real and drastic reduction of emissions urgently needed to avoid the climate crisis.

Fossil fuel corporations have tried to introduce this proposal as a magic formula to address climate change, seeking to profit from the destruction of our ecosystems and communities. These businesses, and the governments that back them, are betting everything on this type of geoengineering of questionable efficacy or flawed and risky technology, instead of investing in clean energy projects that increase energy sovereignty or pursuing other paths to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., keeping fossil fuels in the ground and stopping extractivism)—what is truly needed to halt the climate emergency.

## Carbon Markets

Carbon markets allow corporations to purchase cheap exemptions from U.N. or national-level CO<sub>2</sub> emissions regulations. They also allow anyone to buy a certificate claiming their CO<sub>2</sub> pollution has been “neutralized.” These exemptions and permits are issued in part by corporations and States that engage in activities that “clean” the Earth or that invest in capitalist activities certified as “less destructive than normal”. Power plants in Europe, for example, can continue polluting air with CO<sub>2</sub> while they buy certificates that show that they are colonizing the photosynthetic capacity of forests in Latin America, Africa, or Asia or that they are releasing less methane than what they say is normal.

Carbon markets have spread all over the world since the 1990s and are now the primary official response to the climate crisis in many places. They build on the American model of environmental consulting service markets of the 1970s – 1990s.

They are also related to the neoliberal schemes that allowed firms to save money by not complying with U.S. environmental legislations that came into force in the 1960s and 1970s.

A large part of the new green capitalism is based on carbon markets, backed by leading firms in the mining, oil, mass manufacturing, digital technology, aviation, and maritime transport industries, among others, as well as by Wall Street and Washington NGOs like Environmental Defense Fund and The Nature Conservancy. All U.N. agencies and the World Bank, governments around the world, and thousands of university researchers are in favor of carbon markets.

### **Carbon neutrality**

Businesses and governments promote “carbon neutrality” as a supposed “radical change” that would balance out greenhouse gas emissions “to the extent possible.”

This proposition supposes that each tonne of fossil CO<sub>2</sub> is equal to a tonne absorbed by plants, oceans, soil and rock. But this ignores the distinction between two types of carbon: one extracted from fossils buried for millions of years and the other present in the natural carbon cycle in the troposphere, where life begins. Under this vision, to achieve carbon neutrality, millions of trees must be planted to ‘compensate’ for the carbon currently stored in vegetation, wetlands, soil, and oceans, or through BECCS projects and other proposals.

Even though this carbon-neutrality narrative has no scientific foundation, in practice, it perpetuates the belief that technology will “save” us and eases the feeling of urgency around the need to halt fossil fuel extraction. Corporations seek to ‘burn now, offset later’ (or, in other words, ‘pay to pollute’) and, thus, carbon emissions continue to increase. This has also accelerated the destruction of the natural world by increasing deforestation—and the temperature of the planet.

No oil-dependent and high-energy-consuming model can be carbon neutral.

### **Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA)**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) introduced this term in 2010, and the Global Alliance for Climate-smart Agriculture (GACSA) was officially launched at COP24 in November 2014.

CSA is a proposal to transform and reorient the agricultural system, with the goal of propping up huge agribusiness industries. CSA has been advertised as an effective way to guarantee food security in a changing climate. But in reality, it aims to displace family and peasant farming and end traditional agricultural knowledge and techniques including, care for and maintenance of a variety of hybrid seeds developed and practiced by peasant communities since time immemorial. CSA leads to monopolizing water use, occupying lands, and dependency on toxic agrochemicals and genetically engineered seeds controlled by corporations.

For these reasons, peasant movements and organizations, as well as all who oppose false climate solutions, have denounced CSA. It only increases the profit and control of Big Ag and, simultaneously, benefits and promotes carbon markets.

### **Decarbonisation**

Decarbonisation alludes to actions that allow the model of limitless economic growth to continue—with fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However, it *should refer* to eliminating the consumption of fossil fuels whose molecular structure is carbon-based and whose combustion releases pollutants that affect people’s health and ecosystems, like the greenhouse gases warming Earth’s surface and impacting the climate globally. CO<sub>2</sub> is the most abundant of these gasses originating from human activity.

### **Geoengineering**

Geoengineering is a false and dangerous response to the climate crisis driven by governments and corporations that promote hypothetical schemes of large-scale human intervention in oceans, soil, and the atmosphere, with the objective of “reducing climate change.” Geoengineering promotes “solutions,” based on speculation and manipulation of science, that will grow into profitable business opportunities.

There is no evidence that these proposals will be effective. However, there is growing concern about the potential, devastating, and massive consequences they would have on the climate, Nature, and people’s livelihoods. These proposals would disproportionately increase the impacts—some irreversible—on Earth and local communities, especially those from the Global South.

Geoengineering proposes to address the symptoms of climate change, but ignores its structural causes, and opens the doors to continued fossil fuel extraction and consumption. It suggests that humankind will soon develop the technology to avoid and reverse climate collapse.

These technologies have proven so controversial that the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity established a moratorium on geoengineering in 2020. The moratorium has been repeatedly violated, through projects like managing solar radiation by injecting aerosols into the stratosphere, whitening clouds, firing gunshots into the sky to dissipate rain, or distributing glass microbeads in the ocean and on frozen surfaces in Alaska.

### **Nature Based Solutions (NbSs)**

Nature-based solutions (NBS) are “solutions” for capitalism to continue extracting from and destroying Nature. The term was first used around 2009. NBS are backed by the United Nations, oil corporations like Shell, Chevron, Total, ENI, and BP, mining firms like BHP, and conservation organizations like IUCN, The Nature Conservancy, and Conservation International.

Through NBS, corporations can justify their pollution, claiming that there is “no need to leave fossil fuels in the ground; no need to halt industrial agriculture or mining” because, supposedly, “trees, soil and oceans can clean CO<sub>2</sub> that comes from fossil fuels.”

These corporations prefer land stripped of communities, Indigenous peoples and peasants. Where this is not possible, corporations seek to pay pennies for their environmental services. NBSs also allow the appropriation of these lands to compensate for the loss of biodiversity or water pollution as a result of industrial agriculture or extractivism.

### **Net Zero Emissions**

Decision-makers, government officials, multilateral organisms, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), NGOs, and transnational corporations are increasingly using the term “net zero” or “net zero emissions” as a strategy to greenwash their image, escape accountability, and distract and confuse the public to avoid seriously addressing the climate crisis.

“Net zero” conceals the belief that polluters can continue polluting as usual—or even increase their fossil fuel consumption—by “offsetting” their emissions in

different ways. This model turns emissions into a simplistic math equation: the total amount of emissions added in one area is ‘subtracted’ from another.

The notion of net zero conceals a perverse reality: continuing pollution, supporting dangerous geoengineering experiments, encouraging tree plantations and monocultures, and advancing projects like REDD+ or Nature Based Solutions (NBS)—all to generate big business, like emissions trading systems, so that those who bear historical responsibility for the climate crisis can continue to profit without addressing the structural causes of the crisis.

Applying these false solutions will not only accelerate the climate crisis; it will also increase inequalities and structural injustices, and even condemn historically marginalized and vulnerable communities to progressively worse living conditions—increasing their vulnerability.

### **Offset Mechanisms**

The supremacist view of environmental management has established a narrative to understand and measure the impacts of human activity (primarily large capitalist investment) on ecosystems through liberal economic theories such as environmental economics. These interventions claim to avoid, prevent, mitigate and offset environmental damage, in that order.

To use an analogy: an offset mechanism is like lavishing women with gifts to “offset” daily violence against them.

Offsets are being implemented in various arenas like the carbon cycle or biodiversity loss. It should be clear that an offset scheme supposes to ‘compensate’ for environmental damage or buy ‘biodiversity offset certificates’ so as to destroy biodiversity, in the same place or far away.

Megadams, large-scale hydroelectric power plants, mines, oil wells, highways, and more can lead to the extinction of species of vegetation and animals. Is it really ethical to speak of offsetting one life with another?

Offsetting operates using equivalences: if we destroy biodiversity here, we can conserve it in some other place where there are similar animal and vegetation species; if we release greenhouse gases here, we can pay to acquire carbon credits, through REDD projects, carbon markets, or elsewhere. Hence, the method is not

designed to prevent damage, but rather to allow it to intensify, while obtaining permits to “offset” it.

Far from caring for Earth’s ecosystem and climate, this logic also raises the issue of corporate conservation: territories are being privatized as sources of environmental services and to generate offset permits. These market mechanisms offer big polluters and transnational conservation entities the opportunity to control lands for profit as a facade for continuing to pollute. They often create little ‘protected’ islands that displace legitimate and ancestral communities who have harmoniously preserved the land through their wisdom and practices.

### **Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD)**

One of the many environmental functions of trees and bushes, as they grow, is capturing carbon. When a tree is cut down, this carbon is released in the form of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Because of this, forest degradation and deforestation are a key contribution to climate change. During COP13 in Bali in 2007, the United Nations Climate Change Conference recognized REDD as an instrument to fight climate change. Unfortunately, this concept has worsened the situation rather than improving it.

REDD+ mechanisms do not attempt to avoid emissions or deforestation; they only seek to emit less of what originally would have been emitted through deforestation.

This idea leads to several different problems:

1. Forests and jungles become viewed merely as carbon sinks, neglecting their other vital functions for cultures and ecosystems: if a tree is only useful to store carbon, then a monoculture forest (also known as a green desert, devoid of diversity and hazardous for water and soil) is as valuable as a mixed-species and lively forest that, beyond its role in the carbon cycle, is indispensable for regulating water flows, maintaining biodiversity, and ensuring soil health, among others.
2. In many cases, REDD+ privileges large polluting businesses (also referred to as “carbon cowboys”) and financial speculators, since the value of a forest is calculated according to the amount of carbon it has stored. In this way, it becomes merchandise. REDD is a complicated mechanism. One of the basic ways it works is as follows: a buyer of carbon credits offers a community (often Indigenous owners or caretakers of forests) offset money for not destroying their

lands—which they were not planning to destroy and were already preserving. In exchange, the buyer receives carbon permits that can be used by polluters or as a financial asset. They often sign contracts that may be secret or even written in languages not spoken by the communities involved—for periods up to 100 years, with the possibility of extension.

3. REDD+ transforms cultural relations between peoples and non-human Nature. These projects deprive communities of their relationships with medicine, food, home and spirituality with their territory. Moreover, REDD+ can create pressure for deforestation, since the system relies on creating risk to the ecosystems within it—a perverse incentive.
4. REDD+ contracts assess forests in terms of carbon credits, making them nothing more than *carte blanche* to continue polluting. For example, an oil firm that buys a certain number of carbon credits from a forest already preserved using traditional methods obtains “licenses, permits, or certifications” to emit a similar amount of greenhouse gases anywhere in the world. Therefore, it is clear that REDD does not help fight climate change, and, in fact, it constitutes a violation of territorial rights of the true owners of the forest, the communities that care for the land, who understand the essential contribution of mangroves, jungles, peatlands, forests, and others to the beauty and complexity of life on Earth.
5. REDD+ projects violate the rights of nature: they prohibit traditional use of forests, biodiversity cannot be recreated, and they allow for continued CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, contaminating water and destroying biodiversity.

## Waste-to-energy

In a system that generates increasing amounts of waste, we are faced with a frantic search for short-term solutions such as burying or incinerating waste (and the conversion of waste to energy). This supposed use of trash for energy produces toxic byproducts, pollutes the air, and contributes to climate change. The costs of this are externalized onto people and the environment.

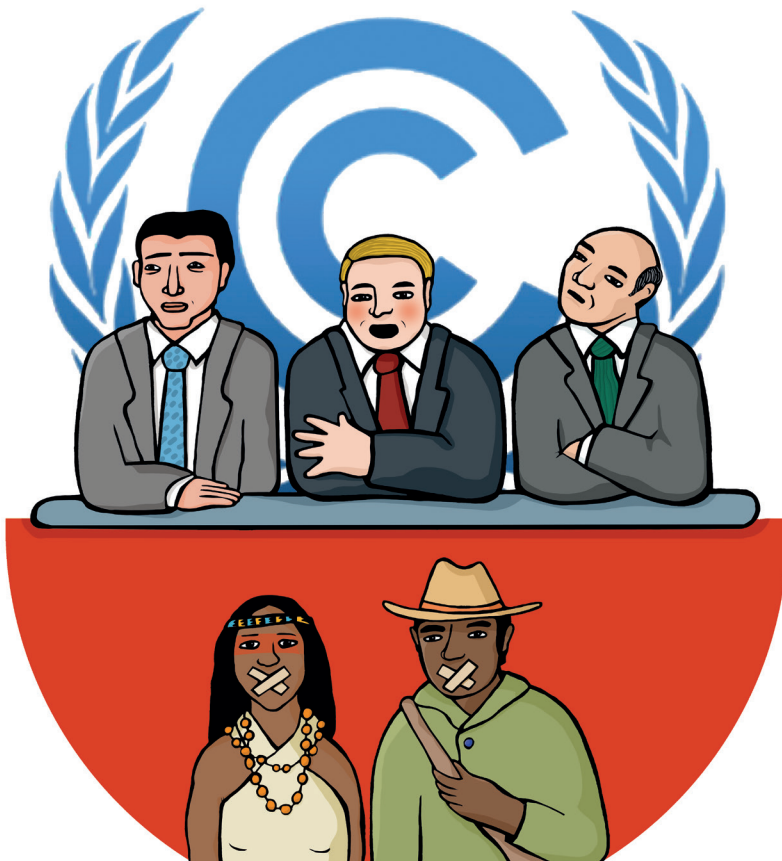
Incinerators emit more CO<sub>2</sub> (per megawatt-hour) than coal, natural gas, or oil-fired power plants. In addition, incineration is the most expensive method of generating energy and handling waste, creating a significant economic burden for cities.

The idea that waste disappears or is reused discourages efforts to reduce waste and discourages care for nature, creating a perverse incentive to generate more waste.



# 3

## CLIMATE CHANGE JARGON



## **Adaptation**

Along with mitigation, adaptation is a term that has been used widely by the United Nations since 2000 to avoid discussing the politics of oil, capitalism, and fossil fuel extraction and combustion.

As an official international goal of climate action, adaptation means preparing capitalism for an increasingly unpredictable and volatile climate. As with mitigation (see below), the idea is that the climate is a kind of “nature” unrelated to “society” that can only be fully understood by professional scientists. So, as the climate changes, political leaders will consult with these scientists on the best ways for societies to adjust so that oil-dependent capitalism can continue.

## **Carbon Budget**

Now a widely used term, “carbon budget” entered the lexicon of scientists, economists and governments in the 1990s. It is one of the primary terms used in climate change jargon, including by many allied organizations.

The underlying premise is that climate change is a problem caused by migration of CO<sub>2</sub> molecules to the wrong place: the atmosphere. According to this logic, the best way to address climate change is not to tackle fossil-fueled capitalism, but rather to halt this CO<sub>2</sub> migration. The concept of a carbon budget suggests that U.N. members must arrive at an agreement on how much more CO<sub>2</sub> will be allowed to reach the atmosphere. In other words, they must decide how much of the “global carbon budget” remains and who will be permitted to use it. Therefore, it seems that when that budget runs out, world leaders will intervene to stop any more CO<sub>2</sub> molecules from reaching the atmosphere.

## **Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR)**

CBDR refers to one of the principles adopted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, which places responsibility for the climate crisis on Global North countries (known as “Annex 1” countries). These obligations include advancing agendas, programs, and decisions to address climate change.

The concept means that Global South countries, although not responsible for the problem, can help to alleviate climate crises in line with their differentiated responsibility.

In other words, countries that have NOT caused the climate crisis and are the most vulnerable to climate disasters are compelled—in an imperialistic, racist and colonial fashion—to take on roles and functions in a) a structure of environmental service sales, commercialization of ecosystems, and financialization of Nature,, b) plans for false climate solutions, and c) a system of climate finance with various conditionalities, debt, and required investments.

Those countries whose history and economic model have caused the climate crisis have blackmailed the rest of the world, declaring they will only take responsibility for this disaster if the other countries accept their “common but differentiated responsibilities,” imposing their “green” business and offset-based economy on everyone else.

The Global North’s responsibility includes acknowledging its climate debt to the South—which must be repaid immediately.

### **Conference of the Parties (COP)**

The Conferences of the Parties (COPs) are the working sessions of the country Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Each country sends a delegation of government officials or their proxies who are responsible for advancing the commitments signed and adopted by the Parties (that is, the countries). Unfortunately, Global North country delegations are funded by businesses, corporations, and unions across the oil, finance, environmental services, and energy sectors, and therefore represent their interests. Similarly, many officials seek to advance their own national commercial agendas. Because of this, the COPs neither represent nor promote environmental interests nor acknowledge the causes of climate change as a global problem. Rather, they impose policies for green capitalism and carbon offsets through lobbying, corruption, and coercion.

COPs are simply business summits; keeping oil in the ground and the people’s real solutions are never discussed. That’s why, since the earliest official negotiations, organizers have held a parallel People’s Summit, where victims of climate disasters and communities resisting false solutions voice their real solutions to global warming.

## Mitigation

Along with adaptation, mitigation is a term that has been used widely by the United Nations since 2000 to avoid discussing the politics of oil, capitalism, and fossil fuel extraction and combustion.

As an official goal of national-level climate policy, mitigation means making climate change “less bad.” The idea is that the climate is a kind of “nature” unrelated to “society” and that only professional scientists can fully understand the effects of an excess of CO<sub>2</sub> molecules. Therefore, the best way political elites can ensure climate change is “less bad” is by consulting with these experts on the cheapest ways of reducing the excess of molecules—while continuing to extract and burn fossil fuels and defending capitalism.

## Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are the core of the Paris Agreement. They refer to the supposed efforts that signatory countries will make to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The NDCs set each country’s baseline for launching carbon offset schemes worldwide. This will be achieved by the use of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs), new goods in the climate market.

It works like this: A country from the Global South promises in its NDC that it will reduce its emissions by a certain percentage—but that it can increase that reduction if offered an economic ‘contribution.’ This incentivizes countries to inflate their supposed, future unconditional emissions, to increase the difference between these emissions and those that depend on money. This difference is sold in the form of ITMOs, and consequently, as carbon offsets, to other countries with less ambitious reduction plans.

NDCs are a lie disguised as a promise; they are States’ new business portfolios in climate negotiations.

## United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The UNFCCC is a foundational treaty for the political response by States to address the climate crisis. It was adopted on 9 May 1992 and entered into force two years later. It was modified in 1997 with the addition of the Kyoto Protocol, which officially kick started carbon market mechanisms. The COP is UNFCCC’s supreme organ or authority.

Although its amendments and additions seek to establish more forceful and legally binding measures, the UNFCCC has not lived up to its expected efficacy or results, mainly due to corporate capture. Instead, it has become a negotiating space for blocking and delaying the urgent climate solutions we need.

## The Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is a treaty negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Implementation of the Paris Agreement will hold grave consequences for peoples, land, forests, climate and the Earth itself: It establishes a global carbon market and doubles down on false solutions, escalating the crisis to devastating proportions.

The Agreement ends the common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) principle. All its measures are based on voluntary cooperation. It boosts projects like REDD+ and many other false solutions. In sum, it is not a treaty to address climate change, but rather a global carbon trade agreement. Its measures do not even attempt to keep Earth’s warming below the temperature increases necessary to avoid irreversible climate catastrophe.

Implementation of the Paris Agreement will never address the cause of global warming—the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. For this reason, people, movements, and organizations must denounce and continue resisting extractivism, the expansion of industrial agriculture and livestock production, runaway development and urban sprawl, unsustainable infrastructure, corporate renewable energy, and false climate solutions.

The Paris Agreement operates within a framework of “forced” consensus toward a green transition that centers market mechanisms—which will only accelerate the collapse.

## Vulnerability

Vulnerability is intentionally defined using terms and figures that avoid incorporating human rights violations, inequalities, or the impacts of extractivist industries as key factors in increased vulnerability to climate change. Communities around the world bear the impacts not just of climate change, but also of extractive and polluting activities that are justified as “necessary” for economic growth.

Impoverished communities, dispossessed of their lands, territories, and rights by the capitalist, extractivist, patriarchal system, are the most vulnerable to climate change. Yet they hold real solutions to the climate crisis.

The concepts of vulnerability and risk must be redefined and given new meanings, in line with global climate justice principles.



# 4

## STRATEGIES OF CORPORATIONS AND STATES



## Corporate Capture and Government Complicity

Corporations deliberately and intentionally work to ensure that decisions made in national and multilateral regulatory spaces are designed to protect their interests and allow their extractivist and polluting activities to continue—thus securing their steady flow of profits.

By the same token, States and decision-makers have an interest in protecting the investments of private and transnational corporations, in order to demonstrate success to the public—as measured by macroeconomic indicators. They also have a personal stake in their own financial gain, derived from the “feasibility” of “economic activities” that harm people and the environment.

Government complicity is the result of a lack of political will to effect profound transformations as well as the petty interests of personal enrichment that government officials are used to. In many cases, “government complicity” is a more appropriate term than “corporate capture,” to avoid sending a romantic or paternalistic message about the government in office.

Sadly, multilateral spaces like the United Nations have been captured by transnational corporations. This has allowed the crises of climate, food, housing, sanitation, and health to become matters of business rather than emergencies to be resolved immediately.

## Green Economy

The “green economy” is an economic model of reinventing capitalism emerging from the evidence that we have already exceeded the boundaries of our planetary and social crises. It consists of the false idea, or oxymoron, of sustainable development. It claims that it is possible to maintain the pace and rationale of infinite economic growth—a philosophy that has already deepened the causes and impacts of climate collapse. It uses marketing strategies like greenwashing, the circular economy, bioeconomics, and NBS, among others. This in turn leads to unjust policies for communities.

## Greenwashing

Greenwashing is the false “environmental-ification” of the commodification of life. It is a rhetorical and discursive strategy that fetishizes goods as “green” — while concealing the externalized environmental impacts of extractivism and

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accumulation by dispossession that characterize goods produced under capitalism. Its marketing strategy consists of deceptive advertising to convince the public to buy supposedly environmentally-friendly products. Greenwashing, also known as the “green sheen,” is also found in policymaking that promotes false solutions.

## **Legal Security for Investments**

This term refers to a set of national and international regulations developed to “attract” transnational corporations and national investors and guarantee long-term profit for their operations.

Historically and coincidentally, these regulations have always been imposed through circumventing and manipulating democratic processes, against the will of the people, and resisted by worker organizations, peasant communities, Indigenous groups, and others.

These regulations rely on sacrificing people’s rights or undoing environmental protections. Common practices by States include unreported employment, loss of the right to prior consultation, or deliberate change in land use, along with subsidies and permits for tax evasion around industrial and extractive activities.

For example, many countries could be taking steps toward a just energy transition; however, corporations are using legal security for investments to sue these countries in international arbitration courts for millions in compensation.

## **Right to Development**

As long as there are historical and differentiated responsibilities for the climate crisis between (poorly labeled) “developed” and “developing” countries, actions and contributions must take this differentiation into account. However, this “right” is frequently used to justify ecologically and socially disastrous policies.

With respect to climate, the right to development is used to avoid taking decisive action to address the causes of global warming. Meanwhile, “developing” countries endure intense extractivism in the name of this “right,” sidestepping the fundamental contradiction between capitalist development and life that has led to the current climate crisis.

# 5

## PEOPLES' PROPOSALS AND SOLUTIONS



## Agroecology

Agroecology is a science, a set of knowledge, a movement, and a praxis that applies ecological know-how in the fields of agricultural, livestock, forest and food production. It maintains a close, respectful relationship in harmony with Nature, and integrates ecosystem-wide health, fair trade, strengthened networks, and added value. In its non-anthropocentric version, agroecology represents an alternative for regenerating and healing lands and webs of life.

## Climate Change Litigation

After more than two decades of delay, ineffectiveness, excuses, and corporate capture and policy interference, along with the failure of international climate negotiations, climate litigation offers an alternative path. It has the potential to force polluting industries to cease operations, provide reparations for damages, and safeguard the rights of vulnerable communities—in a short amount of time.

This strategy is still under development, has limited jurisprudence, and there are limits to its power in the vast majority of countries. Despite this, in the last decade, there have been successful cases of climate litigation all around the world. People and organizations can use it as a tool to hold big polluters—both corporations and governments—accountable, and to demand safeguards for the rights of vulnerable communities and victims of extractivism.

## Community Land Management

The term refers to the management and care that community networks provide to sustain life, land, and the commons, in relationships of interdependence between people and Earth. Communities hold wisdom about their territories: they are acquainted with their needs and implement technologies that yield real solutions for sustainable care, regeneration, repair, and growth. Community land management is an act of resistance that goes beyond conserving (poorly labeled) “natural resources” and ecosystems, embracing profound, dignified, and creative relationships with Nature to preserve life on Earth.

## Degrowth

Degrowth, a concept originating in Europe, refers to reducing consumption and production with the goal of improving human welfare, ecological conditions, and equity worldwide, along with the well-being of Nature and its resources.

## Energy Sovereignty

This approach goes beyond simply energy access, establishing the right to energy as a common good and key component of a dignified life. Energy sovereignty involves shared decision-making and community-based implementation of projects for energy generation, distribution, and control that respect the ecological cycles of Nature. It is a model of just energy production and distribution, with fairness in the control, use, and effects of the energy produced, reconfiguring its scale, ownership, use, and management.

Centering communities' interests and the fight for autonomy and self-management also means resisting massive "development" projects, reclaiming the past and future debt of such projects, and denouncing the current system that unleashes fossil-fueled energy infrastructure to "power" the predominant political, economic, social, and nature-controlling structures that are leading to global collapse.

## Food Sovereignty and Autonomy

Food sovereignty is a concept coined by Via Campesina and discussed at the World Food Summit of 1996. It posits that peoples, countries, and groups of countries have the right to determine their own food and agricultural policies. Food sovereignty prioritizes agricultural production that feeds people; access to land, seeds, and loans; responsible and informed consumption; respect for the work of farmers; and fair pricing for sustainable production. It also includes controls and protections for peasant farmers against artificially cheap agricultural and food imports, unfair competition, and dumping.

Food autonomy recognizes that, beyond food sovereignty, there are diverse world views, self-determination, and management models among peasant communities and communities of consumers. The notion is in line with communal policies that transcend dependence on nation-states, especially in the face of government cooptation and subordination by agribusiness corporations.

## **Just, people-centered energy transition**

A just, people-centered energy transition is a process of changing the current energy system—and, therefore, the capitalist system—of and by the people. It means transformation is based on collective, democratic decision-making, allowing changes in how energy is produced and consumed, to overcome the energy and climate crisis that make up our global systemic crisis.

A just, people-centered energy transition seeks to build a new energy system in which energy is considered a right and a common good that meets the energy demands of the people with dignity and social inclusion, in harmony with Nature. From a socio-ecological and political perspective, it addresses the concentration of ownership, wealth, and power of energy sources, harnessing the potential of clean, ecological energy at the local level. It seeks to establish an energy system rooted in energy sovereignty, including the elimination of fossil fuel consumption, decolonization, decentralization, de-commodification, depatriarchalization and dematerialization, in which the rights of peoples and territories and the rights of Mother Earth are based in principles of communal energy, building a new energy culture, with socio-environmental ethics and justice.

## **Keeping Fossil Fuels In the Ground**

The call to keep fossil fuels in the ground (or “leave the oil in the soil!”) to address the climate crisis is inspired by local resistance and struggles against oil extraction, in order to protect lands, territories, and peoples from pollution and dispossession.

The concept was first introduced on the global stage by Oilwatch International in 2004 at COP10 in Buenos Aires. Since then, dozens of social organizations and social movements worldwide have embraced the idea, raising awareness that the most practical, concrete, and measurable way to slow global warming is to cut it off at the source: the extraction and consumption of gas, oil, and coal.

This strategy contrasts sharply with the false solutions that have taken hold in international climate negotiations over the last few decades that seek to perpetuate oil dependency.

## Loss and Damage and Comprehensive Reparation

The UNFCCC uses the term “loss and damage” to refer to the harms caused by climate change. However, the countries most responsible for global warming and those most affected by the climate crisis have always disagreed about responsibility and compensation owed for such damage.

These days, negotiations over loss and damage focus on researching its impacts and dialogues about “financing” instead of acknowledgement of and restitution for climate debt.

Within the climate justice framework, loss and damage must be a process of “comprehensive reparations” that includes indemnification, civil and criminal liability, and restoration of the rights of human beings and Nature, bringing justice for victims and, most importantly, ensuring the harm cannot be repeated. Moreover, it must be shielded from proposals that would increase debt, add conditionalities, or promote false climate solutions.

## Zero Waste

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recognizes programs that reduce, reuse, and recycle municipal waste as effective and high-impact methods for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The fundamental principle of zero waste solutions is that we should safely return everything we produce and consume to nature or society. We need to adopt principles of material conservation, toxic waste reduction, and equitable access to and distribution of resources to achieve the Paris Agreement’s goal of keeping global warming below 1.5°C. Moreover, these solutions, including waste reduction, redesign, composting, biogas, producer responsibility, transformation of consumption habits, community empowerment, and recycling, could be implemented today using existing innovations—with immediate results. Grassroots recyclers and innovative policymakers and practitioners have already demonstrated that zero waste is a viable strategy.

Together, these practical, bottom-up strategies provide some of the best decentralized urban solutions for reducing climate pollution and present enormous opportunities for developing vibrant local economies.

# GLOSSARY FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

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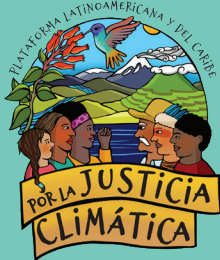
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