

WG03 Intervention

G20 Energy Transitions Working Group Meeting on May 27, 2024

I would like to thank you for this opportunity for civil society to contribute to the debate on the just energy transition. My name is Priscilla Papagiannis, and today, my colleague Natalia Tsuyama and I will be speaking on behalf of Working Group 3 of C20, the engagement group of civil society within the G20. Our working group brings together more than 700 members and focuses on the environment, climate justice, and just energy transition. At the request of Brazil's Ministry of Mines and Energy, we will focus our remarks today on the social dimension of the just energy transition as a contribution to the G20 Energy Transitions Working Group.

Dear colleagues,

In light of the global climate emergency, exemplified by the recent catastrophic flooding in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul and associated crises, such as the loss of biodiversity and growing social inequalities in many regions of the world, the implementation of a truly just, sustainable, and democratic energy transition must be considered a top priority among the G20 countries.

In order to overcome society's long-standing dependence on fossil fuels, transitioning to renewable energy systems of the future is essential. This transition must be guided by scientific advice from the IPCC and ensure that it does not replicate the top-down, exploitative models that have characterized the fossil fuel era. These models have undermined livelihoods and human rights, while wreaking havoc on our planet's ecosystems.

The IEA Net Zero Emissions scenario demonstrates that renewable energy can better meet energy access needs and deliver a 1.5C pathway, in accordance with the Paris Agreement. It is clear that renewable energy systems can make a significant impact in addressing socio-economic inequalities, including major public health issues, that have long been associated with fossil fuel-dependent economies. Promoting a just, accessible, and inclusive energy transition, with due attention to its social dimension, is a top priority of this year's G20, under Brazil's presidency. The recommendations of our working group to the G20 process focus on five key points:

1. A just energy transition must address energy poverty and ensure universal and equitable access to sufficient energy for meeting basic needs and achieving a dignified quality of life

G20 must focus on setting the conditions for universal achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7.1, which is to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services by 2030.

As we transition to renewable energy sources, it is essential to ensure equitable and reliable access for all, including the urban poor and rural communities, indigenous peoples, local communities, Afro-descendant peoples, peasants, women and girls, children and youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, as well as those who are discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and other vulnerable and underrepresented populations. It is essential that the rights of these groups be at the forefront of such efforts. The transition from fossil fuels to low-carbon energy must prioritize both decarbonization and social justice to prevent further inequality and contribute to the sustainable development of these communities.

The deployment of renewable technologies can be highly adaptable, combining large and small-scale grids with on and off-grid technologies. In addition to their positive impact on climate change, renewable energy systems, if properly designed and implemented, can offer numerous advantages in terms of human rights, democratic control, decentralization of production, ownership, and supply chain management. Decentralized and distributed models can facilitate the empowerment of communities and women, income generation opportunities through productive end use, and access to energy in remote areas that benefit from community-based and self-managed systems at a fair price.

It is therefore recommended that the G20 adopt a goal of expanding the generation of distributed energy based on criteria of social needs and mobilize the financial resources and technical assistance to support renewable energy production with economic and social benefits. This should be done while ensuring that energy transition processes do not increase the cost burden on the poorest consumers. One potential avenue for achieving this is through an open and transparent process for accessing funds for small and medium-scale projects, including community and worker-owned decentralized renewable energy projects.

2. While the need for a global energy transition is unquestionable, it cannot take place at the expense of historically exploited peoples and populations.

The increase in the implementation of wind and solar power plants has often been accompanied by an increase in complaints from affected communities regarding human rights violations, the intensification of territorial conflicts, threats to biodiversity, and the aggravation of socio-environmental injustices, increasing poverty, scarcity of resources, and other forms of damage.

G20 countries, including multilateral banks and private sector actors, must develop and implement safeguards to protect against the risks, damages, and impacts that these projects can impose on territories and the peoples and communities that inhabit them. These safeguards must also guarantee reparations for the damage already caused, the mitigation of socio-environmental impacts, and respect for the collective land rights of vulnerable communities.

A large part of the solution lies in the correct implementation of public policies and guarantees of existing rights. Planning processes should include defining not only the wind or solar potential but also other variables to define which territories are available for energy projects and which should be considered exclusion zones. This should take into account the socio-environmental risks of projects, including cumulative impacts. Such planning should be based on dialogue with those who inhabit the territory and environmental premises, including the principle of precaution and prevention. It is imperative that the use of land for food and water production, environmental conservation, and the maintenance of indigenous peoples' and local communities' territories, cultures, and ways of life not be disrupted in order to favor large-scale commercial energy generation. Within decision-making processes, planning must guarantee compliance with ILO Convention 169 concerning the rights of indigenous peoples and traditional communities to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

In addition to the early identification of specific zones requiring additional and/or rapid support deployment and the use of impact assessment tools to refine as much as possible the identification of populations most affected by change, it is recommended that social protection systems (i.e. unemployment benefits, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old-age pensions, child and family benefits, maternity protection, disability pensions, survivors' pensions) be strengthened, particularly for

potentially marginalized groups including women, people with disabilities, and those working in the informal sector.

3. The increased demand for extraction of critical minerals cannot repeat the colonial pattern of resource exploitation of the past

An energy system based on renewable sources should aim to minimize the demand for minerals through energy efficiency, reduced consumption, innovative technology design, and recycling into the mineral cycle. All companies and entities involved in the extractive industries must exercise due diligence and be held accountable for cases of human rights abuses, adopting safeguards based on robust internationally enforceable human rights, labor, and environmental standards.

To avoid a colonial pattern of resource exploitation in developing countries, the G20 must facilitate technology transfer and development, capacity building, and financing that allow developing countries to build local green technologies, rather than simply export raw materials.

It is essential to implement no-go zones for mining and safeguards to protect ecosystems and the rights of affected populations. This should include a fair and ongoing free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) process, as required by the ILO Convention 169. More broadly, it is imperative that national legislation and international agreements concerning the rights of indigenous peoples, traditional communities and rural workers be fully respected.

4. The focus of just transition must be on communities that have been historically dependent on fossil fuels.

G20 national transition plans must prioritize regions and communities historically dependent on fossil fuels and with the greatest gap in energy access. They must also ensure universal social protection for all those affected by the energy transition, with greater urgency for those most vulnerable. Local energy sector change plans should give special consideration to the people and livelihoods that may be affected, and respect the experience, skills, knowledge, and expertise held in those communities in the process of planning and decision-making. This means:

- I. Including affected workers and their communities early in discussions and plans.
- II. Creating alternative decent work opportunities and worker-owned initiatives, prioritizing marginalized groups.
- III. Implementing intra-company mobility programs and on-the-job retraining.
- IV. Providing access to green skills training and retraining, particularly in environmentally friendly sectors, taking into account the need for financial support during retraining.
- V. Access to immediate employment opportunities, including through public-sector employment.
- VI. Adequate retirement and severance packages for those who may not be able to retrain or re-skill to change jobs.

5. A just transition means ensuring consultation with affected communities and effective popular participation throughout the process.

A truly just energy transition must ensure inclusive and equitable decision-making processes that support innovations, such as collective ownership and management of the new decarbonized energy systems by community stakeholders and rights-holders. Such an

approach implies institutional change and structural evolution of energy systems so that inequalities and social conflicts do not re-emerge.

It implies that a just transition not only "compensates" those affected, but also reforms the institutions themselves to ensure democratic decision-making, oriented to the public interest, with due respect for human rights. Many critical issues with profound social implications, including the phasing out of fossil fuels, need to be addressed within comprehensive energy transition plans based on transparent and participatory governance.

Diverse groups of society - including unions and informal workers, indigenous peoples, afro-descendant and other traditional communities, youth, people with disabilities, and other discriminated populations - have often been unjustly excluded from decision-making on energy policies and projects that have negatively impacted them directly or indirectly. Therefore, it is critically essential for these key stakeholders to be guaranteed a place at the table in discussions on energy transition plans, ensuring meaningful, informed, and effective participation in decisions that profoundly affect their future.

The new forms of governance should make use of social dialogue and multi-level participation, and other decision-making mechanisms that ensure effective participation.

Decision-makers and project partners also need to be held accountable as projects move from decision-making and planning, to implementation phases and during operation, with robust, independent monitoring of social and environmental impacts.

In sum, the key elements of this governance process include: i) respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to self-determination, including guarantees of their territorial rights and the right to free, prior, and informed consent, ii) early community participation in decision-making processes, and iii) guarantees of effective mechanisms for grievance and redress.

We, as representatives of C20, are certain that the recommendations presented here can help assure a fair, equitable, and ambitious outcome of your discussions today and subsequent activities of the G20 Energy Transitions Working Group. Thank you very much.

Annex

C20 contribution to the 10 principles to achieve a Just Energy Transition proposed by the Brazilian Government ([original list published in this letter to the Pope](#))

1. Combat energy poverty in all its forms, with a focus on guaranteeing universal access to electricity, fair pricing, expansion of decentralized generation, and clean cooking technologies.
2. Structure efficient mechanisms for allocating costs and subsidies for new technologies with an eye towards facilitating energy access and decentralized generation among the poorest groups of the population.
3. Internalize within energy policies goals to promote income generation to reduce poverty and socioeconomic inequalities, with due attention to gender, racial, and ethnic perspectives.
4. Apply effective measures to prevent and mitigate negative socio-environmental impacts of infrastructure related to the energy sector, including tools for strengthening analysis of risks and alternatives in upstream planning and at the project level, with due attention to human rights and issues of participation and transparency and civil society participation. Such measures should apply to the implementation of renewable technologies, such as solar, wind, and green hydrogen, and the utilization of essential minerals and other materials in supply chains linked to the energy transition.
5. Promote social dialogue and rights-based, early, inclusive stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes related to the energy transition, including upstream sectoral planning.
6. Support social and economic diversification of emerging economies and developing countries rich in renewable energy resources and mineral resources, so that they go beyond raw material exporters and put in place long-term energy planning to guide actions, with due emphasis on local value-added supply chains and financial instruments within energy transition policies.
7. Secure employment alternatives for impacted workers in the process of phasing out fossil fuels, with the creation of decent, quality jobs, including greater female participation in the workforce for the energy transition.
8. Strengthen formal education, skilling, and re-skilling for the energy transition.
9. Recognize the rights of traditional communities and indigenous peoples, including the right to free prior, and informed consent in energy transition projects that affect their territories and livelihoods.
10. Secure universal social protection for all those impacted by the energy transition, and with utmost urgency those among the most vulnerable sections of the population.

References

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