



Pacific Islands Climate Action Network

Position: Just and Equitable Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

October 2023

Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN) is a regional alliance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), social movements and not-for-profit organisations from the Pacific Islands region working on various aspects of climate change, disaster risk and response and sustainable development.

Context

The Paris Climate Change Agreement's objectives are in jeopardy as global greenhouse gas emissions persistently rise, enabled by the profit-driven actions of States, and the corporations that they regulate. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) underscores the urgency to cut these emissions by half within the next ten years to limit global temperature increases. However, the fossil fuel industry's ambitions stand in stark contrast to these goals. While the Paris Agreement focuses on domestic emissions, it doesn't adequately address the market forces that encourage the growth of fossil fuel infrastructure. To tackle this oversight, a worldwide initiative is essential to phase out fossil fuel production in a fair manner. This stance is backed by numerous studies, including the UN Environment's 2022 Production Gap Report and the International Energy Agency, and is advocated by civil society organisations.

The urgency to cease fossil fuel consumption must echo both outside and within the United Nations' negotiation rooms. The Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) can lead in transitioning to a sustainable, fossil-free future. Through regional collaboration, community engagement, and international support, the Pacific can demonstrate a green economy's potential and inspire global climate action aligned with the Paris Agreement. This shift requires, strong political will and ample climate financing based on climate justice and the "polluter-pays" principle, with an inclusive domestic approach involving civil society.

Just and Equitable Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

Transitioning to renewables offers substantial economic and environmental benefits. For example, the Federated States of Micronesia, which spends 10-15% of its GDP on petroleum imports causing nearly 80% of its CO₂ emissions, can benefit immensely. Projects like the

MTCC-Pacific¹ pilot in Vanuatu² have already showcased significant energy efficiency and emission reductions. However, while PSIDS have abundant minerals like copper and lithium vital for renewables within their Exclusive Economic Zones, extracting them, especially via deep-sea mining, threatens to destroy entire marine ecosystems and disturb stable carbon sinks. Such activities can destroy biodiversity without possible recovery within human timeframes and communities dependent on the ocean. An equitable transition is essential, emphasising renewable energy adoption, marine conservation/ protection of oceans as a climate regulator, community well-being, stringent regulations, inclusive decision-making, and adherence to principles like intergenerational equity, the principle to do no harm and the UNFCCC's precautionary guidelines.

The 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM52) in November 2023, themed “Our Voices, Our Choices, Our Pacific Way: Promote, Partner, Prosper,” presents an opportunity to chart an inclusive and equitable roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels and ensuring a just transition.

We're committed to aiding Pacific Island governments in crafting and executing climate policies, frameworks, and guidelines that pave the way for a fair transition to a net-zero carbon economy. The Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN) will champion and support the PSIDS in this global endeavour by: Facilitating PSIDS delegations and CSOs' diplomatic ties with the United Nations and the UNFCCC; Offering evidence-based support for the PSIDS to swiftly move away from fossil fuels, reinforcing their leadership stance.

PICAN Policy Asks³:

The Pacific Island Climate Action Network (PICAN) urges key stakeholders to acknowledge and act on the following policy propositions, underpinned by a core principle of inclusive, participatory decision-making, recognizing the crucial role of civil society, communities, women, youth, PODSOGIESC⁴, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in shaping our collective future:

¹ Maritime Technology Cooperation Center in the Pacific

² MTCC-Pacific (2019). [Pilot Project 1: Uptake Of Ship Energy Efficient Technology Report](#)

³ Key policy asks build on PICAN's [climate justice demands](#), [media statements](#), and [interventions](#).

⁴ PODSOGIESC is the acronym to refer to persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, sex characteristics.

Decisive Action Against Fossil Fuels

- **We call upon countries that are significant producers of fossil fuels to immediately halt expansion of their industries.** This includes ceasing all new oil, coal, and gas projects, and rapidly transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy and energy efficiency. Governments must end all subsidies supporting fossil fuels industries. Similarly, public, and private sector financial institutions are urged to divest from these industries.
- **We call for a global moratorium on all new exploration and development of new oil, gas, and coal reserves and on deep-sea mining.** This action is crucial to prevent the expansion of already unburnable fossil fuel inventories, protect workers, communities, and investments from becoming stranded, and to avoid locking the world into catastrophic and irreversible climate disruption.
- **We call for the regulation of existing fossil fuel stockpiles and production.** Phasing out fossil fuel production in line with the 1.5°C climate goal necessitates the regulation of the fossil fuel supply. This involves placing limits on extraction, removing subsidies for production, dismantling unnecessary infrastructure, and shifting support to safer and more sustainable alternatives.
- **We urge historical fossil fuel producers to acknowledge and address the harm that they have caused in the past, current, and anticipated Losses and Damages** experienced by those least responsible for the climate crisis. In line with the polluter pays principle.
- **We call on these producers to contribute to a dedicated Loss and Damage Fund,** which should be distributed as grants.

Just, Inclusive, and Equitable Transition to Renewable Energy

- **We call for the protection of ecosystems in renewable energy transition.** As we move towards renewable energy, it's imperative to learn from past mistakes and avoid practices that jeopardise our ecosystems. The potential risks of extractive practices for minerals, especially in biodiverse-rich areas like deep-sea regions which also serve as stable carbon sinks, demand that the transition does not further harm the environment and disproportionately harm communities that are dependent on the ocean.
- **We strongly urge all development partners, multilateral development banks, and international financial institutions to allocate the necessary financial resources.** This support is especially crucial for highly fossil fuel-dependent countries, such as the PSIDS, enabling them to swiftly transition to renewable energy and diversify their economies away from fossil fuel-centric industries. Developed countries must without delay provide their fair share of finance to Pacific Small Islands Developing States to enable equitable and just transition of our economies.

- **We urge for immediate collective action and proactive implementation of the just transition.** The magnitude of the challenge necessitates immediate collective action. A peaceful and just transition requires a well-defined path and a proactive strategy for economic diversification, renewable energy deployment, and other reliable, cost-effective low-carbon solutions.

Inclusive, Rights-based Approach to Policy and Action

- **We stress that all efforts must adhere to an intersectional rights-based approach,** thereby ensuring the just phase-out of fossil fuels.
- **We reject any false greenwashing solutions and unnecessary language loopholes** that divert from genuine climate action, such as "unabated" fossil fuels, and "inefficient" subsidies. Science is clear that abatement is the least effective lever towards greenhouse gas emissions through 2030, and no fossil fuel subsidies can be deemed efficient at slowing expansion.
- **We invite all stakeholders to welcome and endorse the 5th Pacific Regional Energy and Transport Ministers Meeting [Efate Outcome Document](#) and the subsequent [Port Vila Call to Action for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel-Free Pacific](#).**
- **We invite Pacific Leaders at the upcoming 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting to establish a Pacific Energy Commissioner for a Just and Equitable Transition to a Fossil Fuel-Free Pacific.**

Global Collaboration and Legal Measures

- **We encourage all nations to strengthen the global fight against climate change by joining the BOGA alliance.** Doing so could help halt fossil fuel expansion on a wider scale.
- **We also urge nations to endorse the fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty** as a significant step towards stimulating negotiations for a global mechanism that ensures an equitable transition away from fossil fuels.
- **Finally, we request all climate-vulnerable states to participate in the advisory opinion on climate change,** as requested by the UNGA at its 77th session of the International Court of Justice. We further request that PSIDS enable the active participation of CSOs in their drafting and oral statement processes.