

COP26 GLASGOW:

What's Needed Now to Avert Climate Chaos



The most important climate talks since the Paris Agreement are scheduled to begin in Glasgow, Scotland, on November 1st, 2021.

Yet the ability to attend and have a full voice at this conference remains in question for Indigenous Peoples, delegates from the least wealthy nations, and those representing Black and Brown communities across the globe — due not only to the inequitable availability of COVID-19 vaccinations, but also due to the inequitable systems of access and participation of the COP.

The COP is meant to build solutions to the concurrent global crises we all face. And yet, communities which are least responsible but most directly and violently impacted by extreme climate change and the human rights violations that accompany fossil fuel and deforestation industries are again being disparately and negatively impacted by the systemic injustice built into the process.

Rainforest Action Network joins a global network of allies demanding real results from the Glasgow Conference of Parties (COP26) for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) toward meeting the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

This year's climate summit will focus on finance — as it should. Finance is not just critical to support developing countries to deal with extreme climate events and transition to a clean energy future, banks and insurers also must immediately cut off the money pipeline supporting fossil fuel expansion and industry-driven deforestation.

The [IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#) declared that human influence has unequivocally warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas emissions are made in the coming decades.

That means major banks and consumer brands driving the expansion of forest-risk commodities into intact forests, peatlands, natural ecosystems and Indigenous territories must adopt and enforce policies to keep forests standing and uphold rights, immediately. They must break ties with clients or suppliers driving industrial logging and the expansion of plantations and pastures into natural forests for palm oil, pulp, timber, soy, and beef production — some of the biggest drivers of deforestation and forest degradation fueling the climate crisis.

Even the conservative International Energy Agency (IEA) agrees countries must end all new fossil fuel exploration and production and stop fossil fuel subsidies, immediately. This transition must be made without relying on increases in bioenergy that threaten biodiversity and communities. Yet, Wall Street and banks around the globe continue to pump billions into the fossil fuel sector.

As forests and carbon-rich peatlands are logged, burned and bulldozed, as fossil fuels are extracted and burned, massive amounts of greenhouse gasses are released into our atmosphere. And the very forests and peatlands that serve as carbon sinks are not only destroyed, but instead release CO₂, contributing to the rise in temperatures. It is absurd and downright irresponsible. Our planet needs a climate deal that holds corporations and financial institutions accountable for their contribution to the existential threats of biodiversity loss and climate change.



Meeting the Scale of the Climate Crisis

“Real Zero” as a Climate North Star

“Net Zero by 2050” has become a common claim from government and private sector players in the lead up to COP26. However, net zero by 2050 is “too little too late.” By 2050, carbon emissions may have already reached levels that could spark catastrophic impacts.

As laid out in a [report by Friends of the Earth International](#), with the support of multiple climate justice organizations, “Real Zero” means “reducing emissions to as close to zero as possible and using ecological approaches to remove residual emissions.” With fossil fuels as the main contributor to global emissions, this means corporate and government net zero commitments cannot be taken seriously without an immediate end to fossil fuel expansion and a clear and actionable plan to phase out fossil fuels overall as quickly as possible.

Deforestation and degradation of natural ecosystems are a significant contributor to global emissions. Protecting forests,

which act as carbon sinks and maximize carbon removal from the atmosphere, is one of the cheapest and fastest means of reducing emissions. Therefore, the multiple net zero commitments we have seen from global brands — the corporations that drive the demand for deforestation through their sourcing of forest-risk commodities — also cannot be taken seriously without proof of an immediate end to the expansion of industrial logging, monoculture plantations and livestock ranches into forests and other natural ecosystems in their supply chains. Moreover, the trajectory of primary forest loss must be reversed as rapidly as possible, and well before 2030, to achieve the level of emission reductions needed to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C.

Far too often, “Net Zero by 2050” is used as a public relations tactic by governments, financial institutions and other corporations to delay real and meaningful action.

And climate delay is essentially climate denial.

Offsets are not a Climate Solution.

TO REACH REAL ZERO, WE MUST:

● Respect Rights and End Violence Towards Frontline Communities Across All Sectors

In its [*Special Report on Climate Change and Land*](#), the IPCC confirmed that strong and organized local and Indigenous communities are a key defense against deforestation and ecological collapse. Indigenous and local communities protect land, culture and livelihoods, and have done so for countless generations. Despite stewarding only approximately 20% of the earth's land, [*Indigenous People protect 80% of global biodiversity*](#). Climate solutions that uphold and center human rights, secure land rights for Indigenous Peoples, and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples must be prioritized — not only because it is the just course of action, but because it is the most effective approach as well.

The failure of multinational corporations and governments to prioritize and uphold human rights increases the violence, intimidation and criminalization experienced by frontline communities and Human Rights Defenders. This correlation is most present in the agribusiness and fossil fuel sectors, specifically in relation to land tenure, land use rights and the rights of affected Indigenous Peoples and communities to give or withhold their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to planned or existing development on their lands.

Land conflicts are commonly responded to through criminalization of social protest, harassment and imprisonment of Indigenous People, women, and activists that are defending the integrity of their territories or communities. According to a recent [*Global Witness Report, Last Line of Defence*](#), 200 environmental defenders were killed in 2020 alone.

● End Financial Support for Fossil Fuel Expansion and Initiate Fossil Fuel Phase-out

The recent [*Net Zero by 2050 report*](#) from the IEA reinforces [*previous conclusions*](#) that no new oil, gas, or coal supply is needed beyond 2021. This determination makes clear that any company making a net zero by 2050 commitment must end support for fossil fuel expansion immediately. No bank or insurance company making a “net zero by 2050” commitment should be taken seriously if they continue to support fossil fuel expansion.

Banks and insurance companies need to urgently end their support for the coal industry, with a full exit by 2030 at the latest in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and European Union countries and by 2040 in the rest of the world. They also should end their support for the tar sands sector, due to its dismal track record on human rights, environmental destruction, and high carbon emissions.

Alongside these short-term commitments, banks must plan for and initiate a full, managed, equitable fossil fuel financing phase-out with a just transition for all affected workers and communities. Similarly, insurance companies must plan to phase out their overall insurance for fossil fuels. Anything less is greenwashing.



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● Prioritize Forest and Peatland Protection

Forests and peatlands are and will continue to be critical to the world's ability to adapt to the significant climate change already underway. Healthy forests will sustain watersheds, lessen the impacts of sea level rise, provide necessary cover from rising temperatures, sustain and promote biodiversity, and sequester CO₂, to name just a few benefits. The protection of natural forests and peatlands must come first and foremost in land-based climate mitigation and adaptation plans — not corporate greenwash 'tree planting' projects. Restoring degraded forests does have a vital role to play in carbon storage and sequestration and must follow efforts that keep primary forests standing. Stopping the conversion of land, and reforming forest-risk commodity supply chains to align with 'No Deforestation, No Peatland and No Exploitation' (NDPE) practices will similarly increase and protect existing carbon stocks. Conversely, continued deforestation and degradation will not only accelerate climate change and biodiversity loss, but will also inhibit the ability of forest communities to cope with climate change, furthering disparate and unjust impacts.

Global policies and interventions to the climate crisis must aim to secure and expand Indigenous communities' legal rights to their land, rather than hand the land over to corporations for forestry, commodity production or fossil fuel extraction. The expansion of forestry, industrial commodity production, and fossil fuel extraction in the last remaining primary forests including intact forest landscapes, natural forests and ecosystems must stop immediately.

● Stop Commodity-driven Deforestation

Governments and corporations must ensure their sourcing and financing of forest-risk commodities does not contribute to deforestation, forest degradation or rights violations. Governments must adopt robust supply chain and financial sector regulations as part of any comprehensive policy response to the fulfillment of the Paris Agreement which must include clear requirements for corporate adoption of NDPE policies.

Forty percent of global deforestation is the result of commodity production — such as palm oil, pulp, paper, beef, soy, cocoa, and timber products. Brands and banks that profit from forest-risk commodities must adopt and adhere to strict policies that not only halt deforestation but secure land rights for Indigenous Peoples and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities affected by the expansion of logging, industrial agriculture and cattle ranching.

Furthermore, the production of livestock is a very significant contributor to methane emissions. To fully address key drivers of climate change, the global food system also needs to transform away from destructive and intensive farming practices to agroecological practices and support more plant-based diets.

Preventing False Solutions

Offsets are not a climate solution. We must do everything possible to reduce emissions in all sectors. There is no room left in the global carbon budget for offsetting and other false solutions like large scale burning of forest biomass for energy as part of renewable energy portfolios or other so-called negative emissions technologies. There is a real risk that COP26 may sign off on a rulebook that entrenches or incentivises false solutions. The world cannot afford corporate or government greenwash.

A carbon offset is defined by the IPCC as a “unit of CO₂-equivalent emissions that is reduced, avoided, or sequestered to compensate for emissions occurring elsewhere.” Offsets are packaged and sold as tradeable credits. As pressure builds on financial institutions, consumer brands and governments to act on climate, they are turning to carbon offsets as opposed to reducing the emissions of their business activities. Many corporations that are the biggest polluters in the fossil fuel sector are looking to use forest offsets to achieve their net zero targets.

Many proposals presented by big polluters for COP26 suggest that the creation of carbon offsets can provide a market-based mechanism to curb deforestation and reduce emissions. This has not worked and will not work. Rather, carbon offset mechanisms of all sorts have so far proven deeply problematic, often failing to reduce emissions and spurring human rights and other abuses. The use of land offsets to meet net zero targets in the energy sectors must not be permitted. It is critical that emissions are reduced where they are produced, rather than offset.

Burning wood for energy releases more CO₂ than coal at the point of combustion, per unit of energy generated. The science disagrees with industry and government actors that claim that this can be counteracted by growing new trees — a fraught proposition that cannot deliver in time to make a meaningful difference — nor by carbon capture technology that remains unproven at scale. This makes bioenergy’s use in large-scale energy generation unacceptable as a climate solution. We stress that it remains a priority to end coal-fired power generation, and substituting woody biomass as a fuel is not a viable option.

A priority for the COP must be to transform faulty ‘market-based solutions’ into a set of solutions contained within our natural systems that will truly protect, manage, and restore biodiverse ecosystems in order to benefit both people and the planet. The global agreements reached at the COP must shut down false solutions and not allow for offsets, logging and expansion of monoculture plantations, and other spurious negative emissions technologies.

Rather than offsets, Rainforest Action Network supports proposals from the Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance (CLARA) for non-market approaches that are financed by the creation of an independent fund. Like a blind trust, such a fund will provide the money needed to secure rights and save rainforests without creating overwhelming volumes of land sector carbon offsets. Carbon offsets only undermine and delay the investments needed to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

Article 6.8 of the Paris Agreement sets out a strong justification for “integrated, holistic and balanced non-market approaches” that should be agreed upon during COP26. These solutions are distinct from the less well-defined and controversial approaches now being pursued under Articles 6.2 and 6.4. Non-market solutions could prioritize the protection and restoration of forests and peatlands, and must aim to secure and expand Indigenous communities’ legal rights to the sustainable management of their lands.

Reference materials cited in our policy statement or that underpin the key demands

- » [IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, Full Report is here](#)
- » [IUCN Policy Statement on Primary Forests including Intact Forest Landscapes](#)
- » [Joint report by IPCC and CBD on Biodiversity and Climate Change.](#)
- » [Chasing Carbon Unicorns: The deception of carbon markets and “net zero”](#)
- » [Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector](#)
- » [Last Line of Defence](#)
- » [Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance](#)
- » [CAN Ecosystems – COP26 Briefing Climate ambition needs and must support biodiversity](#)
- » [Understanding the importance of primary tropical forest protection as a mitigation strategy.](#)
- » [The Final Warning Bell. Climate Crisis Advisory Group](#)
- » [An Assessment of Deforestation and Forest Degradation Drivers in Developing Countries](#)

Recommendations to Banks, Insurers and Brands Fueling the Climate, Biodiversity and Human Rights Crisis

By November 1, 2021, the start of the Glasgow climate talks, all financial institutions and brands must:

● Respect Human Rights and Indigenous Sovereignty

Financial institutions must end all financial services for and investments in any project or company that violates human rights, land rights, engages in practices of racial discrimination, or fails to respect Indigenous People's treaty rights, sovereignty, and right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Consumer brands must play an active role in preventing human rights and land rights violations by enforcing policies and procedures that uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples and communities, including the right to FPIC. Brands must establish human rights monitoring and due diligence systems and field-based methods to verify that the right to FPIC is being respected. This is of particular importance in new frontiers of forestry and plantation expansion, including the tropical rainforests of Indonesia, the Amazon and the Congo basin. Brands must advocate for, and not undermine, legal frameworks that ensure Indigenous Peoples rights to land and FPIC in accordance with international human rights norms. Brands must also enact zero tolerance procedures to prevent violence, criminalization, intimidation, and the killing of land rights defenders.

● End Support for Deforestation and Forest Degradation

Financial institutions must immediately end all financial services for and investments in any company involved in deforestation, natural land conversion or peatland destruction across its supply chain.

Consumer brands must immediately end all sourcing from and investments in any company involved in deforestation, natural land conversion or peatland destruction across its supply chain.

● End Support for Fossil Fuels

Financial institutions must begin a phase-out of all financial services for and investments in the fossil fuel industry, including immediately ending all support for any project or company that is engaged in expanding the extraction, production or transportation of fossil fuels.



For further reference, the "[Principles for Paris-Aligned Financial Institutions](#)," released in September 2020 by more than 60 climate and rights groups from around the world, offers a number of criteria for assessing financial institution's actions to align with the Paris Agreement.



The "[Keep Forests Standing Scorecard](#)" evaluates the policies and actions taken by an influential grouping of global banks and brands to address their role in driving deforestation and human rights violations in forest-risk commodity sectors. The [Keep Borneo's Forests Standing](#) report evaluates the forest footprint of these brands in two provinces of Indonesia.