

Open Letter from Activist Leaders to World Economic Forum Delegates

‘Activist Leaders Call on World Economic Forum Delegates to Declare Climate Emergency’

We support the aspirations of hundreds of millions of people committed to climate justice¹, economic transformation, equality, human rights, the environment, gender justice, and the rights of workers, children, refugees, Indigenous peoples and faith-based communities.

We [#StandTogether](#) with people around the world who envision a better future and we welcome the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) focus in 2020 on ‘Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World’. Yet the Forum’s focus this year in Davos, fifty years on, will ring hollow unless it matches the vision, courage and clarity displayed by those on the frontlines of the climate movement - the young people, women, scientists and community organisers who are leading the way around the world.

We believe it’s time for decision-makers joining the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting to declare a Climate Emergency in their own countries and companies and urgently take the measures necessary to protect humanity and our planet, including some of our most vulnerable communities.

To maximise our chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, we must halve global emissions by 2030 and reach Net-Zero by 2050. This means governments, business, investors and civil society must work together to rapidly transform our economy by the end of the decade, with a just and carefully managed transition that tackles inequalities and upholds human and labor rights.

To deliver a just transition for workers and communities we must:

- 1. End Fossil Fuel Exploration and Extraction** – Rapidly phase out exploration, extraction and use, with high-income countries making the fastest reductions and investors divesting from fossil fuels.
- 2. End Fossil Fuel Subsidies** – Redistribute the 5.2 Trillion USD² in subsidies for fossil fuels to support responsibly produced renewable energy and bolster social protection systems.
- 3. Make Polluters Pay** – Put a meaningful price on pollution and make emitters pay for the true cost of their activities on human health and the environment.

Building a thriving, regenerative, more equal future will require exponential innovation and a new social contract, with fair taxation, human rights, sustainable development, women’s rights and redistribution of resources at the center.

It will require governments to pass laws requiring companies to respect human rights and implement due diligence to identify, address and disclose their social and environmental impacts and prevent and remedy the abuse that is currently endemic in their operations and supply chains. Companies will need to comply strictly with laws, put policies in place quickly and publish and implement clear and just transition plans.

If we do this, we have the possibility of creating millions of jobs and building a better, safer and more prosperous future that works for the many, not just the few, with clean air, restored biodiversity, and affordable, renewable and dependable energy and transport while increasing access to human rights, including health and education, in every community.

It’s time for influential companies and countries who are standing in the way of this future to wake up! The current model no longer serves humanity and the planet and cannot be sustained. We appeal to these decision-makers, heavily represented at the Davos Meeting to heed this call: Declare a climate emergency, end fossil fuel exploration and extraction, end fossil fuel subsidies and make polluters pay the true cost of their activities.

¹ “Principles of Climate Justice”: <https://www.mrfcj.org/pdf/Principles-of-Climate-Justice.pdf>

² IMF Working Paper: <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/WP/2019/WPIEA2019089.ashx>

We further implore these actors to respect the fundamental rights of activists working on these issues to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. This means putting measures in place at a country level or in company operations to minimize risks to activists and protect them from reprisals.

In our opinion, any company that is not operating in a clear and transparent way to support transformative public policies, or failing to respect human rights and the environment, by identifying, disclosing and addressing its negative impacts, is not meeting its responsibilities to society.

Any government or multilateral agency that continues to sanction or subsidise fossil fuel extraction is equally failing humanity. Governments must meet the basic needs and rights of disadvantaged communities and lead a just transition toward an emissions free future.

Every day of delay increases the challenge of achieving sustainability and cohesion. Every voice that speaks out places pressure on those responsible for further climate breakdown, human rights abuses, and deepening inequality. As we begin this decisive decade, it's time for governments and companies meeting at Davos to decide whether they stand with humanity for our common future.