



Key considerations for the upcoming May–June 2021 Climate Change Conference – sessions of the subsidiary bodies:

A race to gender-just climate ambition

**Talking points based on previous WGC demands and a series of stakeholder discussions held in 2020. A further set of recommendations for COP26 will be prepared in summer 2021.*

Why should Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) be gender responsive?

- 2020 is the last chance for countries to keep ambitions truthful towards keeping global warming under 1.5 degrees;
- To enhance ambitious climate action in line with the Paris Agreement, countries are now preparing to submit their enhanced plans. Therefore, advocacy for gender responsive climate action is most crucial in the upcoming months (between now and COP26);
- Ambitious climate action does not only refer to emission reduction targets but ensuring that through those targets - economies and societies are transformed in a way that leaves no one behind. The highest possible ambition must mirror the rights-based principles of the Paris Agreement Preamble;
- The first round of (i) NDCs have not been gender responsive, meaning that in total 64 of 190 NDCs included a reference to women or gender (all non-Annex I countries), most commonly in relation to adaptation (cf. Gender climate tracker, WEDO);
- The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed global as well as national injustices. Women and girls in all their diversity, LGBTIQ+, Indigenous Peoples, workers and discriminated groups affected by intersecting systemic inequalities have been hit hardest but are benefitting the least from the economic recovery packages currently developed across all countries. Therefore, this is the time to ensure that investments in energy, transportation, agriculture and rural as well as urban poor livelihoods are designed and implemented in a socially just, inclusive gender responsive way.
- For more information, please see the [WGC Advocacy Brief: gender-responsive Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#)

Key advocacy messages from the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) at previous Conference of Parties (COP)

- On **Oceans**: The Ocean and Climate Dialogue took place in 2020 according to the COP25 decision. The current UNFCCC narrative on oceans reflects the deeper crisis

of the human-nature relationship which is the result of societal divisions of labour, power and domination of the neoliberal economic system. Thus, we need to set an agenda where actions must protect and restore marine biodiversity and strengthen ocean resilience through ecosystem-based approaches and recognition of local community inputs towards ocean conservation based on traditional knowledge, including the full and meaningful participation of women and girls in all their diversities. Get more insights under “nature-based solutions” to inform our feminist advocacy.

- On **Article 6** (market & non-market mechanisms): COP25 could not conclude rules and guidelines for Article 6. We demand that Article 6 must include strong rights-based; environmental, social and gender safeguards in its implementation. In addition, appropriate consultation processes prior and throughout action with relevant rights holders, including in particular Indigenous Peoples and local communities have to be ensured. Article 6.8 (non-market mechanisms) in particular, provides the opportunity to support a gender-just and equitable transition for all. Get more insights under “nature-based solutions” and “net-zero” to inform our feminist advocacy.
- On **Loss and Damage** and **Climate Induced Migration**: COP25 failed to establish loss and damage as a permanent agenda item under the SBs and the COP nor a governance mechanism resulting from the Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage. Therefore, it remains continuously important to mainstream the topic into other processes, e.g. financial support or capacity building. The Santiago Network as part of the Warsaw Mechanism allows Parties to discuss their challenges and needs in addressing loss and damage. This should include new and innovative sources of finance (eg. refinancing from other budgets and aid) that can generate truly additional resources based on the principles of gender-responsive finance. Moreover, an immediate debt relief, in the form of an interest-free moratorium on debt payments, to developing countries who face climate emergencies must be applied. Negotiations on displacement, migration and planned relocation should be standalone agenda items to the COP process so that a global governance mechanism could be established.
- Further information can be found on the [WGC website](#).

Demystifying 'Nature Based Solutions' and 'Net Zero'

Both “nature based solutions” (NbS) and “net-zero emissions” are hot topics in discussions of resilience and climate adaptation solutions, especially climate mitigation. However, many civil society groups including the CBD Alliance, Global Forest Coalition, Corporate Accountability, and the Third World Network have warned that these terms can be used to disguise climate inaction and portray a false narrative of progress for large carbon emitters.

Definitions:

Nature-based solutions: Actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address societal challenges effectively and

adaptively, to provide both human well-being and biodiversity benefits. (definition source: IUCN)

Net-zero emissions: To achieve net-zero emissions, all emitted carbon must be offset by (permanent) carbon storage. Net-zero emissions is a concept akin to carbon neutrality.

Critiques:

These concepts have been subjected to corporate co-option and greenwashing; corporations and countries with large carbon emissions are touting these strategies as “solutions” while both failing to commit to necessarily massive reductions in emissions and furthering green neocolonialism (carbon colonialism) by proposing offset projects in developing nations. Nature-based solutions are often touted as means of achieving net-zero emissions — thus, the terms are inextricably entangled. Civil society groups warn that both terms are being used to divert attention away from immediate and drastic climate action in the form of emissions reductions. Local communities and right-holders (e.g. farmers, indigenous people) are excluded from decision making or access to information, which facilitates further corporate capture of climate finance, negotiating space, and tax benefits.

The main critiques of NbS are:

- **The definition of the term is not clear.**
- **Unclear definitions lead to corporate capture of the climate space, negotiations, and policy.**
- **Many projects (regardless of their scientifically-proven viability to truly offset carbon emissions) are being implemented by large corporations leading to massive greenwashing.**

The main critiques of the net-zero framework are:

- **Permanent, or even extremely long-term carbon storage is extremely difficult to achieve.**
 - For example, tree farms, an often-used strategy to offset carbon, will only reduce carbon so long as the trees are growing; eventually, through decay or burning, most of the carbon being stored will be released back into the atmosphere.
- **Many researchers warn that carbon-offset programs overestimate carbon reductions actually achieved.**
 - For example, in the case of forests being protected from timber harvesting, much of this protection can be countered by increased harvesting elsewhere.
- **Net-zero pledges are increasing carbon colonialism.**

- Net-zero pledges are being implemented largely in the global south, sometimes with human rights violations including displacing people off of their land ([source](#)).
- **Net-zero has become a synonym for ‘business as usual’ approach**
 - Private companies (eg. plantations, fast moving consumer goods) continue to do activities that do not support the Paris Agreement or SDG targets.

Alternatives and pathways forward:

The Women and Gender Constituency supports the “ecosystem-based approach,” defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2009 as *“the conservation, sustainable management, and restoration of ecosystems to help people adapt to the impacts of climate change.”* Examples of EbA approaches are coastal habitat restoration, agroforestry, integrated water resource management, livelihood diversification, and community-based sustainable forest management interventions.

Civil society groups should first and foremost promote protection of healthy ecosystems from development, and support indigenous and local communities to manage land in sustainable ways. Any and all carbon offsets to achieve net-zero pledges should be implemented in the country of the polluter and in such a way as to be as socially just, gender equitable and sustainable as possible. Additionally, there is a continued need and obligation for developed countries to provide climate finance to developing countries.

Possible upcoming actions to promote these perspectives:

- Develop a letter or brief about the risks associated with net-zero and NbS, to be signed by diverse organizations within civil society so as to galvanize public debate across sectors and geographies.
- Write and publish a high-profile academic article dispelling the legitimacy and reliability of offsetting without urgent and widespread emissions reductions as well.

Resources:

[Not Zero: How ‘net zero’ targets disguise climate inaction](#)

(joint technical briefing by 6 climate justice organizations)

[Nature-based solutions or nature-based seductions? Unpacking the dangerous myth that nature-based solutions can successfully mitigate climate change](#)

(Third World Network)

[How Amazon’s offsets could exaggerate its progress toward “net zero” emissions](#)

(James Temple, MIT Technology Review)

[Nature based solutions to address global societal challenges](#)
(Cohen-Shacham et al, IUCN)

[Framing biodiversity policy for post-2020: W4B reflections on Nature-based solutions](#)
(Mrinalini Rai, reflection blog)

[CBD/NBS Briefing Session on Nature-Based Solutions](#)
(Convention on Biological Diversity, streamed August 2019)

[Convention on Biological Diversity Annotations for Terms and Concepts](#)
(CBD 2020, provides working definitions of nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches, and more)

[State of play of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework](#)
(Lim Li Lin, Third World Network)

[Real Solutions, Real Zero: How Article 6.8 of the Paris Agreement Can Help Pave the Way to 1.5°](#)
(Working group for real solutions, Corporate Accountability)