

**PROPOSALS FOR JUST GREEN
TRANSITIONS AND LIFE-
SUSTAINING ECONOMIES**



Grupo de trabajo
de Sociedad Civil
CELAC-UE

JUSTIFICATION AND CONTEXT

In the current context of a multidimensional crisis — ecological, climate-related, and civilizational — the urgency of implementing just transitions has become an imperative to guarantee the survival and well-being of present and future generations. These crises, resulting from the overexploitation of natural resources, overproduction, and consumerism, threaten life on the planet and demand comprehensive responses that address not only the symptoms but also the structural causes that have generated them. Unfortunately, many current policies — for example, those concerning biodiversity or specific renewable energy sources — have proven insufficient and even counterproductive, as they exacerbate inequalities and fail to offer solutions that are truly just, effective, and sustainable.

The European Union (EU) and the countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) acknowledged, in the Final Declaration of the 2023 EU–CELAC Summit, the need to address the climate crisis, protect human rights, and recognize the role of trade and investment relations in promoting sustainable development. However, the current EU agenda prioritizes industrial and economic competitiveness over environmental concerns, generating tensions between sustainability objectives and financial interests. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the extractivist model has exacerbated the ecological and social crisis, leading to ecosystem degradation, land dispossession, and structural violence. In response, local communities have emerged as key actors, proposing alternatives such as agroecology, food sovereignty, active participation in decision-making, and the recognition of the rights of nature under the paradigm of Buen Vivir.

This approach stands in contrast with that of the EU, which is instrumentalizing cooperation with Latin America to strengthen its “strategic autonomy” in pursuit of the so-called “green” and digital transition, focusing on economic interests that conflict with those of Latin American, Caribbean, and European communities. These communities are demanding environmental justice, the guarantee of human rights, ecosystem protection, and the strengthening of legal frameworks to uphold the right to a healthy environment.

In this scenario, governments must recognize the structural causes of these crises and the legitimate demands of communities.

We call upon the 2025 EU–CELAC Summit to commit to public policies that promote genuine decarbonization of the economy, especially in the Global North, through just transitions that go beyond climate mitigation. To this end, it is necessary to:

- Reassess the dominant economic model and move towards a decentralized and sustainable ecological paradigm, including a reduction of the extraction of raw materials and imposition of limits on the production and consumption of goods, in accordance with the environmental boundaries of the planet¹, especially the six that have already been exceeded.
- Transform the dominant agrarian model, which is based on land concentration and the expansion of the agricultural frontier, towards an approach that guarantees territorial justice, food sovereignty, and ecosystem restoration. This requires recognizing and supporting the demands of rural communities for equitable land redistribution and public policies that strengthen agroecological, sustainable production systems rooted in ancestral knowledge and practices.
- Transform trade relations between the EU and CELAC, overcoming the extractivist and unequal model that benefits corporations and degrades territories. It is necessary to review trade agreements, ensure meaningful participation of communities, protect ecosystems, and establish legal frameworks and new forms of partnerships that guarantee environmental justice and corporate accountability.
- Recognize water and energy as commons, strengthen economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER), and promote socio-environmental protection mechanisms such as the Escazú Agreement, due diligence processes, and the binding treaty on business and human rights.

We recommend adopting a comprehensive and collaborative approach that values the struggles and proposals of communities, fostering a dialogue of knowledge that can guide us in preventing our own destruction as a species. The following four points present public policy proposals, emerging from civil society, aimed at driving genuinely just and transformative transitions.

¹ The nine planetary boundaries, identified by Johan Rockström and 28 scientists from the Stockholm Resilience Centre, include: climate change, biosphere integrity, novel chemical entities, stratospheric ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosols, ocean acidification, the biogeochemical cycles of nitrogen and phosphorus, and changes in freshwater use. In the past fifteen years, it has been shown that six of these boundaries have already crossed safe thresholds. The Earth is an interconnected system where chemical elements, energy, life, and human activity interact, making it crucial to analyze how these boundaries influence and reinforce one another to understand their global impact. <https://climatica.coop/limites-planetarios-cuantificados-los-9/>

PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH JUST TRANSITIONS AND LIFE-SUSTAINING ECONOMIES

1. Transition towards an ecological economy

We propose a transition towards an economic model that respects the dynamics and planetary limits of ecosystems, values life in all its forms, and promotes the well-being of people and their work, particularly their role as agents of conservation and ecosystem regeneration.

To transition to an ecological economy, it is essential to guarantee social, environmental, ethnic, and gender justice. Therefore, such an economy must be inclusive and equitable, implementing public policies that ensure resources for local communities to strengthen their socioeconomic and infrastructural capacities, empowering them to play a central role in the creation and management of this new economic system.

For all communities, the biodynamic relationship with nature is fundamental. They interact with nature under parameters of minimal impact and ecosystem regeneration, which can become a key alternative to halt the climate crisis while generating resources.

It is necessary to move towards a new pact with nature, based on the relationality and interdependence among all beings and ecosystems, guaranteeing the sustainability of dignified life.

Public policy proposals:

We propose to:

- Prioritize policies that drastically reduce the ecological and material footprint of the economy, particularly that of the European Union, which is one of the largest consumers of raw materials in the world. It is necessary to promote a truly circular economy and define clear and measurable limits on the consumption of critical and other raw materials by economic sectors.
- Ensure development financing with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups (including persons with disabilities) and/or the acquisition of accessible technologies that guarantee processes of recycling, reuse, and sustainable use of natural resources, inorganic materials, and energy within territories.
- Create fiscal and economic incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises that use clean technologies and low-impact environmental practices, with particular emphasis on the protection of water sources.

- Promote the production and consumption of local and organic products that adhere to principles of sustainability.
- Guarantee remunerative prices for producers, through measures such as regional border protection (variable import taxes) and public and private regulatory buffer stocks at different levels.
- Encourage the transition towards local popular economies, based on ecosystem stewardship while harnessing its resources under a deep respect for, and protection of, biological and cultural biodiversity. This includes recognizing and valuing the traditional knowledge of communities while simultaneously improving their socioeconomic conditions.

2. AGRARIAN REFORMS AND LAND REDISTRIBUTION WITH AN ECOLOGICAL AND DIFFERENTIAL APPROACH

Local communities, almost unanimously, are calling for equitable land redistribution, prioritizing rural communities that have been impoverished by capitalist economic practices that have concentrated land in the hands of a few and, through the so-called “Green Revolution,” have degraded ecosystems by expanding the agricultural frontier for livestock and monocultures, dispossessing rural communities of their territories and livelihoods. This model has contributed to the destruction of nature by promoting intensive and destructive agricultural practices.

Public policy proposals:

We propose to:

- Guarantee land redistribution for rural communities, particularly those in situations of poverty and vulnerability, with an inclusive approach that ensures fair and equitable access.
- Facilitate equipment and financing (credits, insurance) to support the agroecological and agroforestry intensification of family production systems.
- Promote the transition toward agroecology by allocating clear and accessible financing lines for both communities and research teams, aimed at the recovery and innovation of agroecological techniques that preserve ecosystems, strengthen local economies, and simultaneously mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Provide incentives for agroecological production and ecosystem restoration through subsidies and support for small-scale producers.

- Implement inclusive educational and training programs in agroecological practices and primary product transformation that increase productivity in territories, grounded in ancestral knowledge and applied research.

3. TRADE AGENDA, INVESTMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Current trade relations between the two regions follow an extractivist and neocolonial model, perpetuating the LAC region's position as a supplier of raw materials with low added value, primarily benefiting foreign corporations rather than local development. This model must be transformed.

Given the vulnerability of ecosystems and the persistent push by successive governments to impose megaprojects—often aligned with corporate interests rather than the interests of the population—communities are demanding an environmental justice system that guarantees the protection of ES-CER. Some also advocate for the recognition of the rights of nature, ensuring the active and effective participation of communities in decision-making processes that affect their territories and livelihoods, and protecting the most vulnerable populations from the unjust exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation.

Public policy proposals:

We propose to:

- Review and restructure free trade agreements and association agreements to ensure socio-environmental justice and prevent the overexploitation of natural resources. This entails reassessing, at the international level, the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its responsibility in planetary ecocide. It is necessary to abandon unilateral or extractivist approaches, promoting equitable and sustainable economic relations and trade partnerships between the two regions that prioritize local added value, sustainable investments, and respect for the rights of communities and ecosystems.
- Defend European standards on value chains, in particular, the European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), and ensure that they are implemented inclusively, with support provided to small producers to enable them to comply through mechanisms of technical and financial assistance, to foster fair and equitable trade.
- Implement concrete policies and regulations to prevent harm from trade between CELAC countries and the EU. Among other measures, it is necessary to implement mandatory mechanisms for assessing the impact of trade agreements, eliminate Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms (ISDS) in existing contracts, and establish clear rules that prohibit the

export to other countries of products whose use is not allowed in the EU, to promote policy coherence (for example, toxic pesticides).

- Implement binding regulatory frameworks to ensure corporate legal accountability for human rights violations and environmental harm. In particular, implement the EU Due Diligence Directive, extending its scope to include the financial sector and extractive industries, and advance the adoption of the binding UN treaty on business and human rights.
- Ensure the active and consultative participation of communities in the planning and implementation of development and natural resource exploitation projects, and in the negotiation and review processes of trade agreements, respecting the internationally recognized right to free, prior, and informed consent,² as well as the precautionary principle.
- Create a system of economic and social compensation for communities that have suffered negative impacts from the extractivist and natural resource exploitation model, and ensure that these communities have a voice, a vote, and access to justice in courts by implementing democratic justice mechanisms for environmental damage, such as water, soil, and air pollution.
- Implement alert mechanisms regarding how “green and carbon-neutral economies” redirect capitalist extractivist development models from the global North to the global South and reinforce carbon markets.

4. STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY FROM THE TERRITORIES

For solutions to the current crises to be effective and not perpetuate existing inequalities, it is essential to adopt an ecological model that promotes climate and social justice, and, to that end, citizen participation—particularly that of the most vulnerable communities, both urban and rural. These communities must be key actors in decision-making processes to ensure not only the protection of their ESCER but also the rights of nature and/or the natural resources located within their territories. These actors must also advocate for the right to territory, commons, and equitable access to natural resources.

It is necessary to promote ecological awareness regarding the importance of nature and biodiversity,

² ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples; UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007); UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (2018). These rights have also been recognized in the constitutions and laws of several CELAC member countries.

as well as the planetary boundaries and the causes, effects, and consequences of the multidimensional crisis (civilizational, climate, and ecological), so that communities can propose practical solutions to confront and mitigate it. Increasing collective ecological awareness generates greater commitment within communities, as they recognize their interconnection with the natural environment and, accordingly, commit to changing their behavior.

Just transitions depend on the empowerment of communities through education and awareness-raising, as the climate crisis must not be addressed solely through technical or economic measures, but requires profound shifts in social perceptions of nature, social development, and economic growth.

This is not about communities adapting to the new conditions created by these crises, but about their active participation in conceptualizing, proposing, and leading solutions to the problems affecting their territories, as well as strengthening their capacity to resist the pressures of destructive economic models.

Public policy proposals:

We propose to:

- Ratify and implement the Escazú Agreement³ by all CELAC Member States.
- Promote intergenerational education spaces to reassess the economic model and its impact on the population's quality of life, as well as on leadership and community participation, to strengthen communities' capacity to defend their rights in the face of unsustainable development projects.
- Implement participatory planning and budgeting processes to strengthen democracy and the popular economy in the territories, within a binding regulatory framework that enables effective responses to large-scale mining, energy, and agro-extractive projects.
- Strengthen democracy by creating an inclusive and transparent system of territorial governance that allows communities to manage their natural resources sustainably. It is also essential to invest in the development of public services in rural areas.
- Organize land use in a participatory, representative, and transparent manner around water, taking into account the strategic ecosystems that produce, regulate, and protect it—such as páramos, snow-capped mountains, jungles, forests, wetlands, rivers, mangroves, oceans, coastal and island areas —ensuring water resources are treated as a common good.

SUMMARY

We face an urgent need to implement just transitions in response to the multidimensional crisis (ecological, climate, and civilizational) that threatens the survival of life on the planet. These transitions must extend beyond superficial policies—such as those related to biodiversity or specific renewable energies—which have proven insufficient and, in many cases, counterproductive, as they exacerbate inequalities and fail to address the underlying causes of the crisis. The European Union (EU) and the countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) have acknowledged the need to act. However, tensions persist between sustainability objectives and economic interests, particularly in the EU's agenda, which prioritizes industrial competitiveness over environmental protection.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the extractivist model has exacerbated the ecological and social crisis, leading to environmental degradation, land dispossession, and structural violence. In the face of this, rural and urban communities, including indigenous peoples, peasant communities, and afro-descendant populations, have emerged as key actors proposing alternatives such as agroecology, food sovereignty, and the recognition of the rights of nature under the paradigm of Buen Vivir. These proposals stand in contrast to the EU's approach, which has instrumentalized cooperation with Latin America to strengthen its “strategic autonomy” in the green and digital transition, generating new conflicts or deepening existing ones with both Latin American and European communities.

To move towards genuinely just, inclusive, and equitable transitions, governments must acknowledge the structural causes of the crisis and respond to the legitimate demands of communities through active participation and respect for the principles of free, prior, and informed consent. A call is made to the 2025 EU–CELAC Summit to commit to public policies that promote genuine decarbonization of the economy, particularly in the Global North, through just transitions that go beyond climate mitigation. Furthermore, the protection of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER), including the collective rights of peoples and communities, must be strengthened, and instruments such as the Escazú Agreement must be effectively implemented.

In this regard, our proposal can be summarized in the following recommendations for strengthening or designing public policies around:

² Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (2018).

- 1.** The transition towards an ecological economy: this involves building an economic model that respects planetary boundaries, promotes social, environmental, and gender justice, and empowers local communities. Policies must foster a circular economy, reduce the ecological footprint, and support sustainable practices and clean technologies that minimize impacts and avoid irreversible consequences. This implies defending European standards on value chains (such as the Regulation on Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the Due Diligence Directive) and supporting small producers to enable their transition and ensure their recognition within a fair and sustainable trading system.
- 2.** The implementation of agrarian reforms and land redistribution with an ecological approach: this must lead to the equitable redistribution of land, prioritizing impoverished rural communities, and promoting agroecology through financing, subsidies, and educational programs that preserve ancestral knowledge. Equipment and funding (including credits and insurance) must be facilitated for the agroecological and agroforestry intensification of family production systems.
- 3.** The development of fair-trade relations and a system of environmental justice: it is necessary to review free trade agreements to promote equitable and sustainable economic relations and trade partnerships between the two regions that prioritize local added value and respect for the rights of communities, workers, and ecosystems. It is crucial to expand due diligence and other binding corporate accountability mechanisms, and to protect and compensate communities that have suffered the negative impacts of the extractivist model and the exploitation of natural resources.
- 4.** The strengthening of environmental democracy from the territories: the protection of ESCER and the rights of nature must be guaranteed, and rural, local, and indigenous communities must be empowered in decision-making processes that affect their territories through legal instruments that ensure their active participation, in accordance with the right to consultation and free, prior, and informed consent. The effective implementation of international standards, such as the ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is essential. Additionally, it is crucial to promote ecological awareness and strengthen inclusive territorial governance, prioritizing the protection of strategic ecosystems and ensuring that water and energy are treated as commons.





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