

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES: RECOMMENDATIONS TO G20 FINANCE MINISTERS ON A JUST RECOVERY WITH CLIMATE AT ITS CENTRE

Amnesty International is calling on G20 Finance Ministers to demonstrate global leadership by adopting bold plans at their meeting on 18-19 July 2020 for a just recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic with climate at its centre. We need to build a better future for all.

A 'JUST RECOVERY' THAT PUTS PEOPLE AND CLIMATE AT THE CENTRE

COVID-19 has not pushed the climate emergency away. G20 states are responsible for almost 80% of greenhouse gas emissions.¹ Although some of the measures taken to limit its spread have temporarily reduced greenhouse gas emissions, these reductions are only temporary and have not improved states' ability to limit the increase of global average temperatures to 1.5°C.² Responses to the pandemic risk exacerbating the climate crisis if they roll back environmental protections, unduly delay climate action, or entrench fossil fuel dependency. We must rethink our relationship to the environment, moving away from a solely exploitative model, and promote and implement the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a way to ensure that humans thrive as part of nature.

The decisions we take now will have huge implications for our future. We were already running out of time to tackle the climate crisis. Therefore, in managing the economic fallout of the pandemic, responses must limit - rather than increase - global heating. Given the size of their economies and their contribution to the climate crisis G20 states must lead in adopting stimulus packages and recovery measures that facilitate the transition to a zero-carbon economy and resilient society. At the same time, they must provide an adequate standard of living for all, including people on lower incomes, those working in the informal sector, and others who may be at risk and most affected both by the COVID-19 crisis and the transition to decarbonise the economy.

Fossil fuels and all unsustainable business practices must become a relic of the past. The G20 must provide leadership by expanding its commitment to end inefficient fossil fuel subsidies to include all fossil fuel subsidies without exception, by taxing the fossil fuel-derived profits of energy companies and by boosting investment in human rights-consistent renewable energy through targeted fiscal measures including subsidies. The G20 countries' failure to take all feasible steps within their available capacity to reduce emissions in the shortest possible time frame is putting the lives and human rights of billions at risk, and could violate their human rights obligations.³

RECOMMENDATIONS TO G20 FINANCE MINISTERS

Amnesty International is making the following recommendations to member states of the G20 and to those invited to the 2020 process as they develop G20 COVID-19 Action Plans and national level recovery and economic stimulus packages:

¹ UNEP, Emission Gap Report 2019, <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019>

² Atmospheric Co2 levels rise sharply despite Covid-19 lockdowns, The Guardian, 4 June 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/04/atmospheric-co2-levels-rise-sharply-despite-covid-19-lockdowns>

³ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Committee releases statement on climate change and the Covenant*, 8 October 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23691&LangID=E>

PUT PEOPLE AND CLIMATE AT THE CENTRE OF ECONOMIC STIMULUS MEASURES FOR A JUST RECOVERY

In line with the G20's commitment to support an environmentally sustainable and inclusive recovery consistent with Agenda 2030⁴:

- Ensure that any economic stimulus packages for the formal or informal sector, including those that cover private corporations, include a requirement to prioritise support for workers over corporate profit
 - Any assistance to fossil fuel energy companies should be targeted at workers and the protection of their rights, and the maintenance of current services, rather than for new exploration and development;
 - Condition any such assistance with time bound commitments to phase out fossil fuels in line with the latest scientific advice;
 - Target any assistance to aviation companies at protection of workers' livelihoods and make it conditional on time-bound commitments to reduce emissions in absolute terms without relying on offsets, including by reducing the number of flights within a defined period;
- Invest in sectors that support a just transition to a zero-carbon economy and resilient society, creating green and decent jobs and opportunities:
 - Help workers and communities dependent on the fossil fuel industry and other sectors affected by the transition to access green and decent jobs and opportunities;
 - Ensure women, the most marginalized and those most impacted by the climate crisis have equal access to jobs and opportunities in the emerging zero-carbon sectors.
- End the use of all fossil fuels, take measures to reduce energy demand and shift to human rights-consistent renewable energy as quickly as possible.
 - Refrain from unconditionally bailing out fossil fuel energy and aviation companies that would entrench fossil fuel dependency;
 - End all (not just inefficient) fossil fuel subsidies, as soon as possible and well before 2025;
 - Adopt legislation requiring all energy producers within their jurisdiction to phase out all fossil fuels as soon as possible and no later than 2050 (with an immediate phase out of the dirtiest forms of fossil fuels, in particular coal, peat, fracking and tar sands);
 - Prohibit, in law and practice, further investments to expand fossil fuel exploration, extraction and production including the development of new infrastructure;
 - Stop financing fossil fuel projects in other countries;
 - Impose taxes on profits of energy companies derived from fossil fuels rather than consumers;
 - Provide subsidies for the development of renewable energy sources that respect human rights throughout the entire supply chain;
 - Adopt and implement laws obliging companies to respect human rights and conduct human rights and environmental due diligence on their global operations, value chains and business relationships and establishing civil and criminal liability for damage;
- Ensure transparency over recovery plans and facilitate diverse and public participation in shaping and influencing the recovery and the transition towards a zero-carbon economy, paying particular attention to the needs and voices of the most marginalized, those most impacted by the effects of the pandemic and the climate crisis;
- Explicitly and publicly recognise the important role that human rights defenders play in responding to the pandemic, including the monitoring of government responses in relation to climate, and ensure they are protected from physical and verbal attack and enabled carry out their important work.
- Increase international cooperation and assistance, and support developing countries' move towards zero-carbon economies at the speed we need while protecting people affected by climate impacts.
- Recognise the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment at the national level as well as in relevant G20 declarations and plans;
 - Support the global recognition of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment by the UN.

COVID-19 is not only a health and economic, but also a human rights crisis. It has also shown us that governments are capable of urgent, fast, decisive and multi-sectorial action in the emergency response that protects economic, social and cultural rights. This is an opportunity for the G20 to demonstrate global leadership as we move from emergency to recovery, to create a "new normal" that also addresses the climate crisis.

⁴ G20 Action Plan – Supporting the Global Economy Through the COVID-19 Pandemic; 15 April 2020, [https://g20.org/en/media/Documents/G20_FMCBG_Communicu%C3%A9_EN%20\(2\).pdf](https://g20.org/en/media/Documents/G20_FMCBG_Communicu%C3%A9_EN%20(2).pdf)