

AIDAs Input to the COP30 Presidency Roadmap

Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

The Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA) is a regional organization with more than 25 years of experience that uses the law and science to protect ecosystems and the communities that depend on them in Latin America.

We welcome the call to transition away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner as a critical step for advancing effective and just climate action. In Latin America, however, both the climate crisis and the current dynamics of fossil fuel extraction and phase-out present significant and interconnected challenges for human rights.

Across the region, fossil fuel activities—particularly coal and hydrocarbons—have caused air and water contamination, biodiversity loss, severe health impacts, forced displacement, and restrictions on access to natural resources and livelihoods¹. These impacts constitute violations of rights such as life, health, water, food, and a healthy environment, and disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, and rural populations, deepening existing inequalities². At the same time, countries are advancing energy transition policies, promoting renewable energy and adopting commitments to substitute fossil fuels and mitigate emissions. Yet, in contexts marked by weak regulatory frameworks, limited institutional capacity, and high economic dependence on fossil fuels, both ongoing operations and inadequate closure or exit processes—as well as poorly governed phase-out pathways—risk reproducing or exacerbating human rights harms, including loss of livelihoods, environmental damage, and social conflict³.

The ongoing war in the Middle East is evidencing once more what the climate community has been warning for a long time: the world's dependence on fossil fuels is a profound source of vulnerability. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz triggered a global disruption in oil supply, practically overnight, with severe consequences rippling across the globe. Countries reliant on Middle Eastern oil are facing energy shortages and civil unrest. In Latin America we are facing higher fuel prices and rampant inflation, disproportionately affecting the most marginalized populations.

This crisis, with a very uncertain ending, should not surprise us. It arises directly from the structure of the global energy system, which is concentrated and vulnerable. It underscores that transitioning away from fossil fuels, and ending this disastrous dependence, is not only a matter of climate and environment, but also of democracy, energy security, economic and social stability and, ultimately, human rights. It also underscores why the transition must be just: the sudden disruption of oil supply is causing devastation among countries and communities across the world, with those least responsible for the problem hit the worst.

¹ Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Elisa Morgera. 2025. The imperative of defossilizing our economies. Available in <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/42>

² CIDH. 2026. Regional Hearing: Human rights situation related to fossil fuel extraction in the región. available in: [youtube.com/watch?v=NKuxVCMHLv4&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKuxVCMHLv4&feature=youtu.be)

³ AIDA. 2024. Closure and Responsible Exit: A requirement for environmental and climate justice in Latin America. Available in: <https://aida-americas.org/en/closure-and-responsible-exit>

These realities highlight that transitioning away from fossil fuels is both a climate and a human rights imperative, one that must be addressed through deliberate, well-governed and inclusive approaches.

In response to the COP30 Presidency's call for contributions, and drawing from our work in the region, we put forward three concrete solutions to help advance this agenda. While these are by no means the only actions needed, they represent critical and necessary interventions, each addressing a distinct dimension of the transition, and each offering a significant opportunity for progress: (i) regulating responsible closure and exit of fossil fuel projects, as an enabling condition for the transition to succeed; (ii) Supporting the IMO's Net Zero Framework: the most advanced sectoral effort to phase out fossil fuels; and (iii) establishing fossil fuel exclusion zones, as a logical and urgent first step to prevent the expansion of fossil fuel activities into areas that are incompatible with climate, environmental and human rights obligations.

1 The need to regulate responsible closure and exit of fossil fuel projects

1.1 Closure and exit as a central challenge for the transition⁴

For the transition away from fossil fuels to be credible and socially sustainable, it must address what happens to the territories, communities and workers left behind when fossil fuel activities end. Without clear rules for responsible closure and exit, the transition risks generating opposition from the very communities it should benefit, undermining its legitimacy and pace. Responsible closure and exit is therefore not an additional burden on the transition—it is a condition for the transition to work. From our work in the region, we emphasize that transitioning away from fossil fuels must explicitly incorporate responsible closure and exit processes as a central component of implementation.

In Latin America, the absence of robust regulatory frameworks for closure and exit has resulted in significant environmental, social and economic risks. In multiple cases, companies have abandoned operations, transferred assets or relinquished contracts without adequately addressing accumulated impacts, leaving behind environmental liabilities and social harms.

This lack of accountability has led to the persistence of environmental degradation, long-term health risks, permanent GHG emissions, and increased fiscal burdens on States, which are often forced to assume the costs of remediation.

Moreover, closure is often treated as a short-term, final stage, rather than as a dynamic and iterative process that must be integrated throughout the lifecycle of projects, from design to post-closure.

⁴ Nacionalidad Waorani del Ecuador (NAWE), Plataforma La Guajira le Habla al País (Comunidades indígenas Wayuu de Colombia; Comunidades afrodescendientes de La Guajira; Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/Programa por la Paz (Cinep/PPP); Censat Agua Viva; Colectivo de Abogadas y Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR)), Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA), Comunidades de Tocopilla, Asociación Mujeres de Zona de Sacrificio Quintero-Puchuncaví en Resistencia, & Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra el Cambio Climático (República Dominicana). 2026. *Report submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as a complement to the thematic hearing on the human rights impacts of fossil fuel extraction in the region.*

1.2 Key regulatory and governance gaps⁵

Evidence from the region highlights several critical gaps:

- a. Lack of clear and binding standards**
Existing regulations frequently lack precise, mandatory technical criteria for closure, restoration and post-closure monitoring. In some cases, available guidance is non-binding, leaving implementation to the discretion of companies.
- b. Weak State supervision and enforcement**
States face significant challenges in supervising and enforcing closure obligations, particularly due to insufficient legal clarity and institutional capacity.
- c. Absence of lifecycle-based planning**
Closure is not consistently planned from early project stages, nor is it updated over time, undermining the ability to prevent and manage long-term impacts.
- d. Insufficient financial guarantees**
Current financial assurance mechanisms are often inadequate to cover the full costs of closure, post-closure, and unforeseen impacts.
- e. Lack of regulation of post-closure obligations**
There is often no requirement for companies to remain responsible until environmental conditions are stabilized, nor are there provisions for long-term monitoring or perpetual impacts.
- f. Limited recognition of cumulative and long-term impacts**
Regulatory frameworks frequently fail to address cumulative impacts and long-term environmental liabilities, including those that persist indefinitely.
- g. Weak guarantees of participation and access rights**
Participation is often treated as optional rather than as a right, limiting the ability of affected communities to influence closure decisions.

1.3 Corporate practices that undermine responsible transition⁶

The absence of strong regulation has enabled practices that undermine a just transition, including:

- Abandonment of operations without adequate closure measures
- Transfer of assets or corporate restructuring to dilute responsibility
- Relinquishment of contracts leaving environmental and social liabilities unresolved
- Conversion or repurposing of fossil fuel facilities—such as coal plants transformed into gas or biomass operations—without applying closure obligations to the original activity, and often bypassing environmental impact assessments on the basis that

⁵ AIDA. 2024. Closure and Responsible Exit: A requirement for environmental and climate justice in Latin America. Available in: <https://aida-americas.org/en/closure-and-responsible-exit>

⁶ Nacionalidad Waorani del Ecuador (NAWE), Plataforma La Guajira le Habla al País (Comunidades indígenas Wayuu de Colombia; Comunidades afrodescendientes de La Guajira; Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/Programa por la Paz (Cinep/PPP); Censat Agua Viva; Colectivo de Abogadas y Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR)), Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA), Comunidades de Tocopilla, Asociación Mujeres de Zona de Sacrificio Quintero-Puchuncaví en Resistencia, & Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra el Cambio Climático (República Dominicana). 2026. *Report submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as a complement to the thematic hearing on the human rights impacts of fossil fuel extraction in the region.*

the site has already been evaluated, despite the change in operations constituting a materially different project

- The use of investor-State arbitration mechanisms to discourage or challenge State measures aimed at enforcing environmental protection, international commitments and human rights obligations in the context of the transition
- The exclusion of responsible closure costs from the financial assessments of projects used to classify reserves as “commercial”, allowing projects to appear viable when they cannot cover those costs⁷

Additionally, continued investment in fossil fuel infrastructure reinforces long-term dependence and delays efforts to transition.

1.4 Economic and social dimensions of closure⁸

Closure processes have profound socio-economic implications. Fossil fuel projects generate employment and reshape local economies, creating dependence on extractive activities. Their termination can result in:

- Loss of employment and income
- Disruption of local economies and supply chains
- Increased social vulnerability in affected territories

However, closure processes often lack mandatory plans for economic diversification and labor transition, which are essential to ensure social sustainability.

1.5 Human rights implications⁹

Across the lifecycle of fossil fuel projects, including closure and exit, significant human rights impacts are documented:

- Impacts on health due to air, land and water pollution

⁷ Journal of Petroleum Technology. 2024. Decommissioning costs make producing projects uneconomic. Available in: <https://jpt.spe.org/decommissioning-costs-make-producing-projects-uneconomic>

⁸ Nacionalidad Waorani del Ecuador (NAWE), Plataforma La Guajira le Habla al País (Comunidades indígenas Wayuu de Colombia; Comunidades afrodescendientes de La Guajira; Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/Programa por la Paz (Cinep/PPP); Censat Agua Viva; Colectivo de Abogadas y Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR)), Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA), Comunidades de Tocopilla, Asociación Mujeres de Zona de Sacrificio Quintero-Puchuncaví en Resistencia, & Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra el Cambio Climático (República Dominicana). 2026. *Report submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as a complement to the thematic hearing on the human rights impacts of fossil fuel extraction in the region.*

⁹ Nacionalidad Waorani del Ecuador (NAWE), Plataforma La Guajira le Habla al País (Comunidades indígenas Wayuu de Colombia; Comunidades afrodescendientes de La Guajira; Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/Programa por la Paz (Cinep/PPP); Censat Agua Viva; Colectivo de Abogadas y Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR)), Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA), Comunidades de Tocopilla, Asociación Mujeres de Zona de Sacrificio Quintero-Puchuncaví en Resistencia, & Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra el Cambio Climático (República Dominicana). 2026. *Report submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as a complement to the thematic hearing on the human rights impacts of fossil fuel extraction in the region.*

- Restrictions on access to water and food production
- Forced displacement and loss of livelihoods
- Disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities
- Risks to environmental defenders and limitations on access to justice

The lack of adequate closure and exit processes exacerbates these impacts and may lead to their perpetuation over time.

1.6 Elements for regulatory frameworks on responsible closure and exit¹⁰

Based on the evidence provided, regulatory frameworks should incorporate the following elements:

- **Lifecycle-based closure planning**, initiated at early stages and continuously updated
- **Comprehensive environmental management**, including restoration, remediation and long-term monitoring
- **Clear allocation of responsibilities** across all actors in the value chain
- **Robust financial guarantees** to cover closure and post-closure obligations
- Ban approval for new projects that cannot demonstrate that their profits are sufficient to cover the costs of responsible closure
- **Mechanisms to prevent evasion of responsibility**, including cases of asset transfer or contract relinquishment
- **Recognition and management of cumulative and long-term impacts**
- **Mandatory inclusion of participation rights**, ensuring access to information, participation and justice
- **Integration of economic diversification and labor transition measures**

2 Supporting the IMO's Net Zero Framework: the most advanced sectoral effort to phase out fossil fuels

The current economy is strongly linked to the use of fossil fuels. Decarbonization across sectors of the global economy is necessary to multilaterally address the challenges triggered by this complex process.

Although the maritime sector is responsible for only 2% of global CO₂ emissions, it is a figure that could increase if the current trajectory of fossil fuel use continues. Moreover, the sector is especially relevant to consider as it has been moving decisively, through the International Maritime Organization (IMO), in a decarbonization strategy that intends to gradually phase-out of fossil fuels by 2050. The plan includes a call to develop viable energy alternatives and technical and economic measures to ensure that the sector's energy transition is carried out with a focus on reduction of emissions and justice.

¹⁰ AIDA. 2024. Closure and Responsible Exit: A requirement for environmental and climate justice in Latin America. Available in: <https://aida-americas.org/en/closure-and-responsible-exit>

In this context, during 2024 and 2025, a series of economic assessments were conducted within the IMO to foresee the costs the transition would generate in three areas: industry, national economies, and specific globally traded goods. Complementarily, a global study was developed on the impact of maritime decarbonization on food security. Based on these assessments, various models were created to identify the most appropriate pathways to ensure that the costs of the transition do not exceed its benefits and that no disproportionate impacts occur in specific regions or countries.

In parallel, the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), part of the IMO, has developed a series of analyses on the different viable energy options to achieve decarbonization in the maritime sector by 2050. These analyses include the life cycle of each available energy option, their energy production intensity factors and emissions, their scalability, and other aspects.

Based on these studies, the IMO presented the “Net Zero Framework,” to member States, a proposed amendment to the MARPOL Agreement, specifically Annex VI, aimed at creating a legally binding mechanism applicable to all signatory States, serving as the sector’s roadmap for decarbonization through the gradual phase-out of fossil fuels.

This “Net Zero Framework” includes two types of measures to achieve sectoral decarbonization goals: technical measures, for the development of new non-fossil energy alternatives as well as new maritime technologies, clearly defining responsibilities in the decarbonization process; and economic measures, through the creation of the “Net Zero Fund,” which provides clear financing to support this process and ensures a just transition by investing in technology advances but recognizing the economic impacts that decarbonization may have on countries, too.

This agreement was approved by vote in March 2025 during the MEPC-83 session but did not achieve ratification at MEPC 83.ES in October 2025, due to strong opposition from countries with large oil extraction and processing industries. These countries oppose the exclusion of fossil fuels—especially liquified natural gas (LNG) —from the maritime sector’s energy options. As a result, during MEPC-83.ES, these countries requested that approval of the reform to MARPOL Annex VI be postponed for one year. It is expected that in October 2026 this discussion will once again be brought before the IMO plenary for resolution.

The significance of the IMO’s Net Zero Framework extends well beyond the maritime sector’s 2% share of global CO₂ emissions. It represents the most advanced multilateral effort ever undertaken to agree on the phase-out of fossil fuels in an entire economic sector. No other international process has come as close to establishing a binding, sector-wide roadmap for decarbonization that includes both a timeline for phasing out fossil fuels and a dedicated financing mechanism to ensure a just transition. That it was approved by vote at MEPC-83 demonstrates that a critical mass of countries is ready to act. That it was not ratified at MEPC-83.ES demonstrates only that opposition from fossil fuel interests remains a barrier—not that the solution is unviable. Moreover, the convening of the First International Conference on Fossil Fuel Phase-Out in Santa Marta, Colombia, in April 2026,

signals a growing coalition of willing countries and actors determined to advance this agenda. The very existence of this gathering demonstrates that the political will which the MARPOL amendment narrowly lacked might be obtainable. In this context, the COP30 Presidency has a unique opportunity to support this process. A clear signal from the Presidency in favor of the approval of the Net Zero Framework at the IMO could provide the decisive push needed ahead of the October 2026 MEPC session, to ensure that the sector mobilizes toward making decarbonization a reality.

3 The need to establish fossil fuel exclusion zones as a central and initial tool for the transition

An energy transition compatible with the objectives of the Paris Agreement requires not only managing the gradual phase-out of existing fossil fuel activities but also adopting regulatory measures to prevent the expansion of new activities incompatible with those objectives. This is the most fundamental and logical first step in any transition strategy: before planning how to close existing operations or decarbonize entire sectors, the first imperative is to stop expanding. And the most sensible place to start is where the stakes are highest: strategic ecosystems, critical carbon sinks, Indigenous territories, and areas of extraordinary biodiversity, where new fossil fuel activities would cause the most irreversible harm.

Within this framework, the creation of Fossil Fuel Free Zones (FFZs) constitutes an appropriate legal-territorial instrument to operationalize climate, environmental, and human rights obligations, through the delimitation of areas in which the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons is prohibited.

FFZs are areas at the regional, national or subnational level where fossil fuel exploration and production are banned. In Latin America, the absence of clear territorial instruments to restrict fossil fuel expansion has enabled the overlap of extractive activities with protected areas, Indigenous territories, and key ecosystems, generating socio-environmental conflicts, biodiversity loss, and long-term climate risks.

FFZs can strengthen the governance for the transition, by placing human rights and ecological integrity at the center, while articulating existing policies on land-use planning, environmental protection, and energy planning.

3.1 Main regulatory and governance gaps¹⁰

A comparative analysis in the region reveals the following structural deficiencies in implementing effective exclusion zones¹¹:

a. Absence of binding legal frameworks

In most legal systems, there are no laws establishing territorial exclusions for fossil fuel activities.

b. Institutional fragmentation

Competence related to energy, environment, and land-use planning are distributed across different levels of government, without effective interjurisdictional coordination mechanisms¹².

c. Weak integration of land-use planning

Territorial planning instruments do not systematically integrate criteria related to climate mitigation, protection of carbon sinks, ecosystem resilience, biodiversity, or energy transition.

d. Insufficient recognition of territorial rights

Although Indigenous peoples' rights are recognized in instruments such as ILO Convention 169, their translation into effective mechanisms for excluding extractive activities from their territories is limited or, in some jurisdictions, non-existent.

e. Limited subnational implementation capacity

Local and regional governments often lack the legal tools or resources to establish restrictions.

f. Lack of regional coordination in shared ecosystems

Transboundary biomes (such as the Amazon or the Mesoamerican Reef System) lack robust joint governance mechanisms

3.2 Practices that undermine the effectiveness of exclusion zones

In the absence of strong frameworks to protect valuable or key ecosystems, practices that undermine transition objectives are observed:

- Granting new licenses in areas of high environmental sensitivity
- Overlapping hydrocarbon blocks with protected areas or Indigenous territories¹³
- Fragmentation and reclassification of projects to avoid regulatory restrictions and bypass environmental controls
- Use of legal exceptions or regulatory loopholes to enable extractive activities in ecosystems that are incompatible with those activities
- Economic and legal pressures (including international arbitration) that discourage restrictions
- Expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure generating technological and financial “lock-in” effects, hindering energy and productive alternatives

These practices produce irreversible damage on key ecosystems, perpetuate dependence on fossil fuels and increase the future costs of the transition.

3.3 Economic and social dimensions of FFZs

The implementation of FFZs has significant socio-economic implications that must be addressed with integrated strategies for economic diversification and just territorial development¹⁴. Among others, there is a need for:

- Redefinition of territorial development models
- Need for sustainable economic alternatives¹⁵

- Address potential tensions in regions dependent on extractive activities¹⁶
- Protection of biodiversity-based local economies
- Strengthening of sustainable livelihoods
- Reduction of economic risks associated with stranded assets and environmental liabilities
- Attraction of climate and conservation financing

3.4 Human rights implications

The delimitation of FFZs constitutes a preventive measure against negative impacts on human rights, including the right to a healthy environment, to water and health, territorial rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities and the right to participation and to free, prior, and informed consent.

It is also consistent with the principle of environmental non-regression and with state due diligence obligations regarding harm prevention. It also provenly reduces risks associated with environmental contamination, forced displacement, loss of livelihoods and violence against environmental defenders.

3.5 Elements for regulatory frameworks on exclusion zones

Based on available evidence, FFZs should incorporate the following elements:

a) Clear territorial designation criteria, including:

- National and subnational protected areas
- Indigenous and community territories (TIs, TIOCs, ICCAs)
- Critical ecosystems (primary forests, wetlands, reefs, etc.)
- Key biodiversity areas and habitats of threatened species
- Areas recognized under international agreements (Ramsar, World Heritage, etc.)

b) Binding legal instruments, in order of stringency:

- Legal moratoria on new licenses
- Legislative bans on exploration/exploitation
- Cancellation or non-award of blocks
- Decrees based on environmental or energy legislation
- Binding land-use planning instruments
- New specific regulatory frameworks for FFZs

c) Multilevel governance approach

- National governments: legal frameworks and roadmaps
- Subnational governments: territorial implementation
- Parliaments: legislative approval
- Indigenous peoples and civil society: participation and monitoring
- Regional bodies: coordination to include ecosystems shared between two or more countries, such as the Amazon.

d) Integration into national roadmaps

FFZs must be explicitly incorporated into NDCs and long-term transition and decarbonization strategies as an urgent measure to prevent further irreversible damage to strategic ecosystems and the deepening of fossil fuel dependency.

e) Regional coordination

Development of cooperation instruments for shared biomes.

f) Financing and support mechanisms

Including international financing, public banks, and cooperation.

g) Guarantees of participation and access to justice

Ensuring inclusive, transparent, and binding processes, consistent with the standards of the Escazú Agreement regarding access to information, participation, and justice.

3.6 Regional example: the Amazon

The Amazon illustrates the urgency of implementing FFZs. Currently, millions of hectares of intact forests, Indigenous territories, and high-biodiversity areas overlap with oil and gas blocks¹¹.

Given its critical role as a global carbon sink and the extraordinary biological and cultural diversity it holds, protecting this biome is paramount and requires immediate measures, including a ban on fossil fuel expansion. Scientific literature warns of the risk of reaching tipping points, reinforcing the need for strict regulatory measures to limit the expansion of extractive activities.

4 Conclusions

The transition away from fossil fuels presents not only a climate challenge, but also a governance and human rights imperative. Experiences from Latin America demonstrate that this transition will not succeed unless it is deliberately designed to be just, and that the tools to do so are available.

The three solutions presented in this submission address distinct but complementary dimensions of the challenge: establishing fossil fuel exclusion zones prevents the expansion of the problem; regulating responsible closure and exit ensures that the phase-out of existing operations does not generate new injustices; and supporting sectoral

¹¹ Parliamentarians for a fossil-free future. 2025. Protegiendo el corazón de nuestro planeta Hoja de ruta de los parlamentarios por una Amazonía libre de combustibles fósiles. Available in: https://drive.google.com/file/d/19_oJk7qzx8UsVUGYWuCB0XRK5CL1I3YF/view

transition processes, such as the IMO's Net Zero Framework, translates the global commitment into binding, sector-specific action.

We urge the COP30 Presidency to incorporate these approaches into the Roadmap, recognizing that a just, orderly and equitable transition requires concrete governance instruments, strong human rights safeguards, and decisive political leadership to move from commitment to implementation. Concrete opportunities to advance these solutions are already on the horizon—the First International Conference on Fossil Fuel Phase-Out in Santa Marta in April 2026 and the IMO's MEPC session in October 2026 offer critical near-term milestones where the Presidency's leadership can catalyze action.