



OILWATCH LATIN AMERICA STATEMENT

OCTOBER 2021

THE CLIMATE DEBATE IS NOT ABOUT CO₂ MOLECULES

IT IS URGENT TO ENSURE THAT FOSSIL ENERGIES REMAIN BURIED FOREVER

The extraction, burning and industrial use of fossil fuels constitute the main cause of the climate crisis. Since 1830, and at an exponential rate of increase during the last two decades, the planet has warmed due to greenhouse gas emissions. Just 100 energy corporations are responsible for 71% of the emissions generated since 1988. Policies focused on monitoring and counting carbon dioxide (CO₂) molecules are part of the problem, insofar as they are used to divert attention from the central issue: the continuing exploitation of coal, oil and gas under an energy-hungry, petro-dependent economic model.

Carbon accounting – the basis of most official climate policies – is all about moving molecules around, creating false equivalences, erasing emissions with a “click”, and hiding responsibilities, in order to carry on business as usual while covering up the roots of the climate crisis. The focus is on inventorying emissions and percentages to be reduced (or rather, to be permitted) and using the numbers to claim that transfers of CO₂ into the atmosphere can be “compensated for” by supposed future transfers out of it.

Quantifying CO₂ emissions is the smokescreen that allows the governments of the global North to continue to finance the fossil industry to the tune of trillions of dollars, even after the signing of the 2015 Paris Agreement. Pretending that addressing climate change is a matter of measuring and managing CO₂ molecules is a way of privileging the market and subjecting traditional communities to violations of the rights of humans and nature, while at the same time making global warming worse.

Examples of this farce include proposals for “carbon neutrality” or “net zero emissions”, which, by assuming falsely that emissions generated in the fossil extraction chain can be offset by the carbon fixed by natural processes or geoengineering, will only exacerbate global warming. Other examples include the Clean Development Mechanism, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+), Nature-Based Solutions, “climate-smart” agriculture and livestock-raising, and Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS). Although such proposals are usually presented as conservation programs, they are in fact part of a speculative business model that has nothing to do with constructive responses to climate crisis.

All these proposals make invisible the debt that is owed to nature and ordinary people. They deceive the public into believing that climate action is being taken while the reality is nothing more than a stubborn defense of a defunct business model. We don't need more tricks like “carbon offsets”. Climate action should instead aim at leaving hydrocarbons in the ground. That is the way to bring emissions to “real zero” in a short time, guided by the precepts of climate justice.

This is the path that OILWATCH has been proposing for decades, as the Ogoni of the Niger Delta taught us in 1995, the U'wa people of Colombia in 1997, and Acción Ecológica in Ecuador in 2007 with the Yasuní initiative. It is the path that the peoples, organizations and social movements of all Latin America reaffirm today. In keeping with this thinking, OILWATCH proposed, at the 2015 Paris COP, the creation of Annex Zero*, which could include countries, states and nations that have started on the path to emancipate themselves from dependence on fossil fuels.

The only way to confront environmental crises effectively is to leave coal, oil and gas in the ground, and to implement immediate and massive reparations for nature and for peoples, lands and territories sacrificed to extractive activities. The road to confronting the climate crisis must be traveled together with the peoples and organizations that fight for an Earth that supports the life of all of us, together with the rest of the beings that ensure that living has meaning.

**COAL, OIL AND GAS MUST BE LEFT IN THE GROUND!
NO FALSE SOLUTIONS!**

Signed by OILWATCH Latin America and its organizations:

Argentina
Observatorio Petrolero Sur
Brasil
FASE ES
Campanha Nem Um Poço a Mais
Bolivia
Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia (Cedib)
Colombia
Censat Agua Viva
Costa Rica
Oilwatch Costa Rica
Ecuador
Acción Ecológica
Unión de Afectados por la Petrolera Chevron-Texaco (UDAPT)
Honduras
Coalición Nacional de Redes y Organizaciones Ambientales de Honduras (Conroa)
Peru
Instituto Natura
Perú EQUIDAD
Venezuela
Observatório de Ecologia Política

*SEE THE [ANEX 0](#) PROPOSAL OF OILWATCH

