



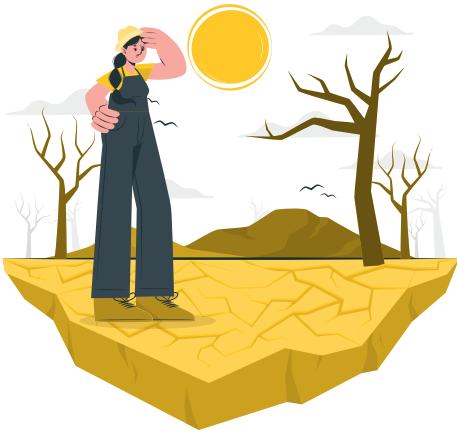
**MS TCDC**  
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# **POSITION PAPER ON CLIMATE JUSTICE**

Written and adopted by  
MS TCDC through its  
Leadership & Governance  
Academy



## What is the Climate Crisis?



The earliest known human fossils — millions of years old — have all been found in Africa. Africa is the motherland of plenty. Only recently (less than 100,000 years ago) did humans even consider leaving this land. And only very recently (less than 200 years ago) humans began to suffer the catastrophic effects of climate change begotten of the Industrial Revolution.

In other words, humans have been enjoying stable and predictable weather patterns for at least 99.995% of their history on Earth. Only recently have industrial production and mass pollution activities accelerated ecological degradation, food insecurity, forced migration, racialized xenophobia at a mass scale, and water scarcity, to name just a few.

Unsurprisingly, there is little hope in the global economy slowing down, or in political leaders cooperating to solve these converging crises. Climate chaos has increased exponentially over the past two generations — a blink of an eye, considering the short stay of our species on this planet. Globalized capital amassed by a handful of ever self-enriching billionaires has multiplied the impact of colonial mercantilism and violent industrialization. Rather than slowing down and making a shift to renewable energy (a modest proposal that could easily be financed by just a few of these ultra-wealthy), they continue to consolidate their wealth and power at the expense of the rest of us. Autocracies and social democracies alike prostrate to billionaire interests, betraying their own citizens.

While private jets and superyachts spirit carbon criminals away from the rampant wildfires and floods that displace millions, the international community remains deadlocked in protracted negotiations. An existential emergency is upon us.

## How much time do we have?



5 years, 233 days, 5 hours, 57 minutes, and 14 seconds. At the time of publishing this position paper on August 25, 2023, the world's leading scientists indicate that there are less than six years left to prevent a global rise to 1.5 above pre-industrial temperatures. Such a temperature rise would mean more widespread hunger, disease, and death for the poorest members of our species, as if not enough climate catastrophe has already ensued.

Within this time, Earthlings must make a full transition away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy. We must return land to the sovereign governance of indigenous peoples and rapidly regenerate native biodiversity. We must eliminate industrialized food systems and revitalize ancestral food practices, agroecology, and small-scale local food production. Hyper-industrialized nations with advanced economies must pay climate reparations to the majority of nations they have pillaged, to better ensure humanity's survival through the inevitable chaos that the current and coming generations will suffer.

Immense changes must be made at a seemingly impossible pace. How do we accomplish such a monumental feat?

# Key strategies for thwarting and surviving climate chaos

Our hope is situated at the intersection of science, story, and strategy. Science informs us which major shifts are needed. Story engenders passion and will among people who will make the difference. Political strategy guides us on which levers to pull, and how. The recommendations below — informed by these three aspects of climate struggle — wield enough power to keep planetary warming below 1.5.

## 1. Freeze development of all fossil fuel infrastructure. Shift to renewables.

No factor is raising carbon emissions and destroying communities faster than fossil fuel development. The use of oil and gas will not subside without massive disruption to processes of production and distribution. Every new oil rig and pipeline hastens climate chaos. Or to put it more optimistically: every delay and closure of new fossil fuel infrastructure buys us more time. Pulling investment by transnational corporations out of oil and gas and nationalizing energy can catalyze the shift to renewable energy and reduce run-away profiteering by billionaires. Nationalizing energy can also accelerate more just, green jobs markets and expand social services.

## 2. Secure climate reparations for African nations and other less industrialized postcolonial states.

The majority of the world is not responsible for the climate crisis. Capitalism is responsible — namely those hoarding excessive wealth. Studies on carbon emissions indicate that Africa contributes less to global warming than any other continent. Its people, land, water, and resources have been greatly pillaged to the ceaseless wealth accumulation of capitalists and the exasperation of Africans. Africa has been raped, looted, and left for dead by neocolonial industry. She is owed recompense for loss and damage, and indeed must receive it from her transgressors, if she hopes to survive. Such reparations can finance climate adaptation through scaling local solutions championed by indigenous communities.

## 3. Expand indigenous land sovereignty.

Indigenous peoples of the world have endured apocalyptic times for several centuries. Their wisdom and leadership in regenerative ecology transcends western science. We cannot do this without them. Land and life stolen from indigenous communities must be returned. They must lead in governing our planet and showing us the way to new life. We must define indigenous land sovereignty justly, not erasing indigenous minorities in countries with black and brown majorities. (The Benet and Batwa in Uganda, the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, or the Baka in Cameroon, for instance, have much more wisdom on climate than the non-indigenous majorities that occupy duty-bearing positions in national governments and perpetually oppress them.)

#### **4. Dismantle industrial food systems and revitalize economies of agroecology.**

No industry except fossil fuels contributes more to greenhouse gas emissions than agriculture and food. The industrial food system has developed into something entirely unintuitive. All of us have ancestors that worked in concert with the land. “Local food” was once merely “food.” There was nothing else. Many African communities remain more built to survive than most, producing an abundance of nutritious crops. But even in these resilient places, capitalism encroaches in the form of land grabs, monocropping, industrially modified seeds, water privatization, dangerous corporate pesticides, predatory agricultural loans, and the destruction of cooperatives and trade unions, to name just a few. Industrial food systems must be rejected. Large-scale revitalization of ancestral agrarian practices must be undertaken, through initiatives such as seed banks, community land defense, resource nationalization, and the strengthening of autonomous member-run institutions that ensure food security, ecological health, and collective prosperity for farmers and workers. Viable agroecology efforts are those that can scale widely and quickly enough to depose harmful industrial food practices. They must not be depoliticized; they are political projects that must intend to interrupt the violence of corporate agriculture and food.

#### **5. Restore native biodiversity.**

Native biodiversity, including carbon sinks, are key to restoring environmental health, and slowing and reversing the effects of climate change. Native flora and fauna hold an ecosystem in balance and also keep humans healthy. Wherever possible, programs to restore such life should be undertaken. Such programs must, however, be disambiguated from corporate “green,” “forest-cover,” and “tree-planting” projects. Not all trees are equal in the quest to decrease climate catastrophe. Not all places are equal, either: tropical environments receive more sunlight and can capture carbon more quickly. Native biodiversity programs should take care to avoid corporate capture.

#### **6. Articulate new visions for ecotopia.**

Humans are wired for story, and they take action based on what they can imagine. Dystopian narratives and utopian visions help us create the future, for better and for worse. The language and rhetoric we employ, the framing we use, must resonate in the minds and hearts of those we seek to mobilize. The African practice of Sankofa helps us carry the wisdom and values of our past into the future with us. Ecofeminist societies can exist again. Compelling climate narratives will open doors for more leaderful movements. They will villainize the small handful of true villains and subvert neoliberal narratives that atomize individuals by inaccurately blaming the majority of humanity for climate change. They will invite us in, suggesting concrete actions that assist the pursuit of compelling and imaginative futures.



## What principles are essential for delivering on this strategy?

To accomplish the above six paramount objectives that are informed by science, story, and strategy, we must reject private sector expertise and sweeping generalizations offered by various high-level fora that have consistently disappointed the climate struggle. The bulk of our partnerships, funding, programming, staffing, and attention should be built around the following:

### → **Scaling direct action.**

Direct action is action that intervenes directly on an issue without relying upon appeals to third parties. When youth blockade and seize charcoal from trucks exporting it, they are taking direct action. When indigenous elders “trespass” in their ancestral lands to graze cattle in territories deemed “conservation lands” or “national parks,” they are exercising direct action. When environmentalists damage machinery being used to destroy forests or water bodies, they are taking direct action. They are living as though they have self-agency and authority, not recognizing the supposedly preeminent legitimacy of third parties like governments or foreign companies. Direct action is often (not always) high-risk, but it is also high-reward. It takes many forms, including but not limited to monkeywrenching, land occupation and expropriation, blockades, disrobing, and divestments (such as in pension funds). Climate chaos is imminent. Now is not a time to concentrate on incremental, polite reforms. Courageous local and transnational groups exercising direct action for climate justice in any of its forms deserve our comradeship and support. (More information on direct action is available in the MS TCDC Direct Action position paper.)

### → **Nurturing broad, intersectional cooperation among climate justice actors.**

The climate justice movement is the most diverse and populous movement in world history. It encompasses innumerable movements, trade unions, organizations, government actors, and peoples. Its depth and breath are something to applaud, given the vast complexity of climate change. Bringing climate justice actors together, however, is not enough. Organizations focusing on supporting the climate movement must invest in nurturing trust and cooperation where mutual interests align. Joint efforts that foster collaboration and solidarity between groups working on the six key strategies above should be given primacy, especially if they are targeting strategic high-level “villains” such as climate-harming corporations and states.



## Adopt this position paper

This position paper was written and adopted by the Leadership and Governance Academy at MS TCDC. It is created especially for African organizations that wish to adopt the tenets expressed herein. If your organization or group is in agreement with the contents of this paper, meticulously researched over several years with support from numerous leading climate thinkers and organizers across Africa and the world, then we encourage you to write to us at [wilmotp@mstcdc.or.tz](mailto:wilmotp@mstcdc.or.tz) and [karamagia@mstcdc.or.tz](mailto:karamagia@mstcdc.or.tz). We will be eager to support you in taking a brave position on climate justice, and putting action behind your ideals. We must act faster, more powerfully, and with greater solidarity.







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