

**A Call for Transformative Action:
Centre Peoples' Rights and Solutions in Addressing
Climate Crises, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution**

*Collective Statement of the Asia Pacific Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum
for the 6th Asia Pacific Forum of Environment Ministers and Authorities
and the 7th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly*

27 August 2025 | Nadi, Fiji

I. Chapeau

1. We, XXX representatives of the major groups, civil society and grassroots organisations, met at Nadi, Fiji, on the 27th August 2025 to reaffirm our commitment to environmental sustainability. We amplify the voices of marginalised and vulnerable communities and present their concerns to policymakers and stakeholders ahead of the 6th Forum of Environment Ministers and Authorities of Asia-Pacific (AP-6) and the 7th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).
2. We are deeply concerned that the multiple and overlapping economic and environmental crises persist – poverty, rising inequality, climate change, disasters, biodiversity loss, pollution, and ecosystem collapse. These stem from systemic and structural barriers such as colonialism, militarism, wars and conflicts, power imbalances between and within countries, and corporate greed. These crises cannot be solved in isolation; they demand sustained action to address the structural roots of a system that benefits a few at the expense of people and the planet.

II. Asia and the Pacific amidst intersecting crises: climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and pollution

Asia and the Pacific: context and challenges

3. Asia and the Pacific are a microcosm of global stagnation, where environmental decline and the dominance of industrialised countries in economy, finance, technology and trade keep developing nations trapped in poverty and underdevelopment despite their abundant natural and human resources.
4. The region is alarmingly off track on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate action. The Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025 shows that the region is deeply regressing on climate action, indicating governments' failure to deliver on sustainable development and environmental commitments.
5. Stark gaps persist and commitments to gender equality and social inclusion in climate policies are facing pushback, implementing gender transformative climate action more constrained in addition to prevailing patriarchal norms.
6. Escalating conflicts, wars of aggression, and militarisation constrain the region's limited progress. Rising geopolitical rivalries and the growing presence of foreign military bases and operations divert critical resources away from urgent social and climate needs.
7. Civic space in the region is shrinking. Asia and the Pacific remains one of the most dangerous regions for environmental and land rights defenders. Nearly 40% of all killings of environmental and rights defenders worldwide occur in Asia-Pacific countries, often linked to resource extraction and large-scale infrastructure projects.

A. Climate crisis

8. Asia and the Pacific's rapid economic growth has come at the expense of planetary health and now faces an existential threat from climate change, risking decades of progress and burdening future generations.

9. The marginalised suffer the heaviest impacts of the climate crisis. Six of the world's ten most disaster-affected countries are in the region, risking a reduction of regional outputs by 17% by 2070. The region also accounts for about 70% of global climate-related internal displacement, threatening the most vulnerable, disrupting livelihoods, endangering health, and eroding jobs and social capital.
10. Asia and the Pacific rely heavily on fossil fuels (85%), accounting for 75% of global coal production and 94% of global coal pipeline. It generates 60% of global GHG emissions and 59% of the material footprint, with 17 countries in the region responsible for 97% of regional emissions. In stark contrast, Pacific Small Island Developing States contribute less than 0.01% yet face an existential threat.
11. Renewable energy sources in the region also have associated problems, such as the displacement of workers and communities, inundation of agricultural lands, and conflicts in the case of hydroelectric mega-dam projects. Extraction and processing of critical minerals and deep-sea mining pose serious threats to already fragile ecosystems and bring harm to food security and the livelihoods of people in affected areas.
12. Asia and the Pacific receive only a quarter of the global climate finance. Funding is highly uneven, and more than 70% of the climate finance in the region is debt-creating. The unsustainable level of indebtedness constrains countries' capacity and resources for environmental protection, building community resilience, and achieving the SDGs.
13. Moreover, mitigation takes up 91% of climate finance, while adaptation accounts for only 0.1% of the regional gross domestic product (GDP), despite its critical need in developing countries.

B. Biodiversity loss

14. Globally, there has been a catastrophic decline in the average size of the monitored wildlife populations in just fifty years (1970-2020). According to the WWF Living Planet Report 2024, the strongest decline is in the freshwater ecosystems (85%), followed by terrestrial (69%) and marine ecosystems (56%).
15. Since 1970, Asia and the Pacific have suffered the world's third-largest biodiversity decline after Latin America and Africa, driven by habitat loss, environmental degradation, food systems pollution, overexploitation, and invasive species.
16. Despite existing regional policy and learning frameworks, implementation to combat biodiversity loss and degradation remains patchy across the 22 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). A lack of wetland protection legislation across PICTs undermines ecosystem and habitat protection, directly impacting SDG 6 and SDG 1.
17. Rising ecological and environmental pressures threaten the livelihoods of millions in the region. Land degradation has affected about 850 million hectares (28% of the land), 60% of the coastal mangroves have been cleared for development, over 40% of coral reefs have disappeared, and a bleaching event (2023-25) has affected 80% of those remaining.
18. Asia and the Pacific's economy relies heavily on its coastline and natural resources, yet 70% of the global population at risk from sea level rise lives here. One-third of regional jobs are climate-vulnerable, with Pacific SIDS facing the harshest impacts. The most impacted are women, 50-60% of whom depend on fishing for survival.
19. Water insecurity is a major challenge in Asia and the Pacific, with over 500 million people lacking safe drinking water and 1.1 billion people without adequate sanitation. Strained by land degradation, pollution, and climate change, water resources face further stress from droughts, floods, overuse, and contamination, undermining both quality and quantity and deepening inequalities.

C. Pollution

20. An estimated 4 billion people in Asia and the Pacific (92% of the population) are exposed to air pollution, which is far above the level set by the World Health Organization (WHO). Air pollution

results in millions of deaths that disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including women, children, and the elderly.

21. Toxic chemical contamination as well as industrial and chemical pollution, remain a pressing concern across Asia and the Pacific. Various studies by the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) underscore the widespread exposure of Asian and Pacific populations to persistent and harmful chemicals and hazardous substances (including mercury and PFAS), crippling ecosystems and biodiversity and endangering public health, particularly of child-rearing mothers and workers in industrial areas.¹
22. Asia and the Pacific is a major contributor as well as a victim of global plastic pollution. Pacific island nations' economies are disproportionately affected by plastic pollution, despite contributing only 1.5% to this global problem. Following China's 2018 ban on plastic waste imports, exports from high-income countries to Southeast Asia surged. The ongoing waste trade has turned parts of Asia-Pacific into a dumping ground, deepening environmental injustices and straining domestic waste systems.
23. The setting up of the Intergovernmental Science Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISPCWP) in June 2025 is a welcome development. This panel will be relevant for Asia and the Pacific as many countries continue to use highly hazardous pesticides and dangerous chemicals that are banned in the EU and other countries.

IV. Science, Technology, Data and AI in Asia Pacific

24. The 2030 Agenda has emphasised the role of science, technology and innovation (STI) in promoting the SDGs. STI, however, is often reduced to institutional science and corporate-led innovations that promote false solutions to the problems in agriculture and food, nature and biodiversity, and climate change. This hugely undermines diverse knowledge systems and lived experiences, citizen science, traditional wisdom, local innovations and time-tested solutions that are key foundations for building community resilience.
25. Despite commitments in international collaboration and north-south cooperation, technology transfer often comes attached with conditionalities in local market access and intellectual property protection, restricting technology diffusion and deployment that have far-reaching effects on agriculture and health, to green tech, advanced manufacturing, digital infrastructure, and artificial intelligence (AI).
26. As a result of rapid digitalisation and the rise of AI globally, data centres have mushroomed in Asia and the Pacific to store and process the massive amount of data generated by tech platforms, governments, institutions, and companies. Control over data centres and digital platforms by a handful of companies in industrial countries raises concerns about data extraction and sovereignty, commercialization of data without consent, and economic dependence.
27. Only a handful of companies in industrialized countries dominate the global AI space and effectively control who can build and scale AI systems. This creates technological dependence, digital sovereignty risks, barriers to public/local innovations, platform dependence and surveillance risks and presents a strong potential for geopolitical coercion, bias and cultural misrepresentation, unfair competition, policy manipulation and power asymmetry.
28. The environmental footprints of digitalisation and AI in Asia and the Pacific hinder the realisation of the commitments of countries in the region to sustainable solutions that build community resilience. Data centers and fabrication of microchips for AI and digital tools are notorious for consuming too much water to cool down supercomputers and purify wafers, competing with domestic and agricultural uses. The colossal energy requirement of data centers as AI adoption increases could undermine the commitments of governments to attain their climate mitigation goals and to wean

¹ IPEN (2017, 2023), Nexus3, Food Packaging Forum (2024).

from fossil fuel dependence. Construction of huge data centers by big technology platforms in some countries in the region is already causing displacement, marginalization and conflicts.

V. Environmental Multilateralism, MEAs and UNEA 7

29. The fractures of multilateralism are deepening. The rate of environmental degradation outpaces the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). While unmet promises of financial flows from the Global North to the Global South remain a primary deal breaker, recent geopolitical tensions are influencing negotiations, undermining cooperation, and reducing consensus in environmental multilateralism.
30. Last year has been particularly lackluster for environmental multilateralism. COP 29 in Baku failed to meet the developing countries' demand for a new collective, quantified goal of USD 1.3 trillion. The UN Convention on Biological Diversity COP 16 in Cali failed to adopt a monitoring framework and to close the finance gap of USD 700 billion. Similarly, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification COP in Riyadh failed to adopt a Protocol to prevent droughts. In 2025 tried to recover some ground with the establishment of the Inter-governmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Wastes and Pollution.
31. Support for environmental defenders remains almost nonexistent. Human rights, gender, and climate justice principles in MEAs that have been previously won by civil society are being challenged and have been reduced to rhetoric.
32. The Draft Medium-Term Strategy (2026–2029) and Programme of Work and Budget (2026–2027) provide a strong global framework to address the triple planetary crisis, yet further efforts are needed to ensure they adequately reflect the specific circumstances, priorities, and financing needs of the Asia-Pacific region and to deliver tangible benefits for communities at the frontline.

VI. Recommendations

A. Protect rights and reclaim democratic and civic space

1. Defend civic space and guarantee inclusive, equitable, and meaningful participation of civil society, grassroots, and Indigenous Peoples, workers, children, youth, and women in governance and decision-making at all levels.
2. Establish direct partnerships with and access to finance to support Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous women and youth, in exercising effective land-use governance, ensuring legal recognition of customary tenure, and data sovereignty and data governance with respect to the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
3. Adopt and enforce legal safeguards for environmental human rights defenders.
4. Integrate and implement, with effective monitoring and reporting, the Gender Action Plan under the UNFCCC, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and target 23 of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in national policies and plans such as the Nationally Determined Contributions, the National Adaptation Plans, and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans.
5. Adopt mandatory measures to guarantee a just transition free from human rights violations across all value chains. Ensure accountability and compliance in green development by promoting responsible supply chains in renewable energy, marine, fisheries, and other industries in alignment with the Business and Human Rights (BHR) framework under the UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs).

B. Enhance resilience and adaptive capacity through people-centered solutions

1. Support community-led, ecosystem-based adaptation rooted in traditional and Indigenous knowledge and local realities.

2. Support and provide equitable resources to women- and community-led resilience initiatives, including early warning systems, preparedness training, and emergency response networks, and ensure women in all their diversities, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups can access safe, accessible technologies.
3. Support inclusive policy development by integrating Indigenous knowledge as well as the needs and perspectives of women, including young women with disabilities, into national disaster management policies.
4. Build social protection systems for informal workers, climate migrants, and those at risk from transition-related job losses.
5. Increase adaptation finance, prioritising grants, not loans, especially for Pacific SIDS and marginalised groups.

C. Protect ecological integrity and reject false solutions

1. Rapidly phase out fossil fuels, halt new coal and petrochemical expansion, and ensure a just energy transition.
2. Ensure the robust protection and restoration of critical ecosystems across Asia and the Pacific, including forests, coral reefs, mangroves and wetlands, recognising their intrinsic rights, value and the vital services they provide for nature and people.
3. Safeguard water as a human right by securing finance for resilient water infrastructure, safe and affordable services, and sanitation, and by transferring technologies such as efficient water-use systems, wastewater treatment, and digital monitoring tools to enhance access, prevent pollution, and build climate resilience.
4. Regulate and eliminate toxic chemicals and highly hazardous pesticides and strictly monitor continuous trade, distribution and use of banned pesticides in the region.
5. Reject techno-fixes and corporate-driven “nature-based solutions” that do not center justice, biodiversity protection, or people’s rights.
6. Reject geoengineering as a solution to address the symptoms of the climate crisis, and ban all open-air experiments and deployment of solar radiation modification (SRM).
7. Expand “sustainable solutions” to environmental challenges by recognising and promoting local innovations, Indigenous and traditional knowledge, and time-tested technologies and systems that matter most to people’s lives and concretely contribute to the achievement of SDGs.
8. Operationalise the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Wetlands. Firmly establish the existence and protection needs of wetlands in the UNEA-7 agreement and advance national, regional and global action plans with wetland protection laws, accountability targets and a biodiversity loss reversal agenda for Asia and the Pacific and beyond.
9. Develop regional targets and indicators to track ecosystem and habitat restoration under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, with Pacific Island countries advancing a specific Ecological Restoration Target supported by new policies.
10. Ensure inclusive and participatory governance on critical minerals, with regional assessments and guidance integrated, and designate no-go zones for extraction in protected areas, vulnerable ecosystems, geo parks and world heritage sites.

D. Reform multilateralism and global financial architecture

1. Ensure that the principle of intergenerational equity is included in the ministerial outcomes of the AP6 and UNEA-7, recognising that every generation holds the Earth in common with members of the present generation and with other generations, past and future. This principle affirms fairness among generations in the use and conservation of the environment and its natural resources.
2. Ensure that the AP6 Ministerial outcomes include a strong call for gender and environment, and integrate gender-responsive measures and the universal human rights of women and girls across all UNEA-7 framework activities.

3. Deliver on adequate, predictable, and equitable climate finance, prioritising adaptation, loss and damage, and community needs, not just mitigation.
4. Create and implement mechanisms for direct, simplified and equitable access to biodiversity finance for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth.
5. Cancel unsustainable debt, end harmful trade conditionalities, and restructure global finance to support the SDGs.
6. Ensure the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Wastes and Pollution is adequately financed and adheres to the principles of independence, inclusivity, and is rooted in environmental and public health interest science.
7. Ensure that the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work prioritises concrete deliverables on coastal and island resilience, transboundary air pollution, plastics and toxic chemicals, and biodiversity protection, while also strengthening access to finance and regionally relevant science-policy support to deliver tangible benefits for communities at the frontline.
8. Close the military emissions gap, integrate environmental restoration into peace processes, and ensure accountability for war-related ecological harm.

E. Advance equitable and sovereign access to STI

1. Remove barriers to transfer, diffusion and deployment of technologies, especially those from publicly-funded and open access research and development that are needed by communities to address development challenges.
2. Promote and provide adequate support for the development of local capacities to design, manufacture and fabricate appropriate technologies and innovations at the local, national and regional levels.
3. Enable equitable access to digital infrastructures based on the needs, capacities and terms defined by communities.
4. Safeguard digital privacy and data sovereignty, protect from big tech domination, and promote public interest innovation.
5. Recognise, support and fund citizen science, traditional knowledge, and local solutions as on par with institutional or corporate "innovation."

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