

Call to Action for COP28

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GNDR Climate Working Group – 7 November 2023

COP28 marks the most important milestone in the Paris Agreement negotiations to date. With the Global Stocktake at COP28 following on from the Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework and the wider 2030 Agenda, it is clear that much work needs to be done to achieve global objectives. Global temperatures, sea levels, and the frequency of extreme weather events continue to rise with increasing strain on natural and financial resources contributing to loss of lives, livelihoods, conflict, displacement, and more. Meanwhile, local communities at the frontline of climate change, especially those in the global south, continue to pay the greatest share of the costs - and disproportionately so. Negotiators at COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh established the historical agreement to establish a loss and damage (L&D) fund and funding mechanism to enable vulnerable countries to respond and recover from climate impacts. As we approach COP28 and negotiations are stalling, the pressure is on to operationalise the fund and mechanism while ensuring meaningful delivery on L&D for those at the frontline. At the same time, our members continue to advocate for familiar and recurring themes including localisation, finance, inclusion, and the need for more efforts in fragile and conflict settings.

This call to action has been co-developed with GNDR members from across the globe. It draws upon findings from targeted membership surveys, inputs from our network's Climate Working Group, policy positions, and consultations with members. With over 1,800 members based in 130 countries, GNDR is the largest international network of civil society organisations working together to strengthen the resilience of communities most at risk of disasters. As such, we jointly call upon climate negotiators and policymakers in development, humanitarian response, and disaster risk reduction to:

1. Listen to and engage with the communities at the frontline of the climate crisis

The involvement of local communities in decision-making processes is essential. As national delegations proceed to COP28, we urge them to ensure that the views of their local constituencies are not only taken into account but acted upon and effectively

represented in negotiations. Our research continues to show that 84% of local actors - civil society organisations, local governments, and community members - are not included in assessing threats, preparing policies and plans, nor in taking action to reduce threats. Moreover, efforts to avert, minimise and address the impacts of climate-induced disasters that involve local knowledge and practices are demonstrably more effective in producing and implementing adaptive national and global strategies than those that do not. GNDR and our membership insist that climate negotiators and policymakers listen to and engage with those at the frontline while representing their views at COP28.

2. Enhance the engagement of civil society to strengthen effective climate actions at local and global levels

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) must be meaningfully included in the negotiations, decision-making and implementation at all levels and work together to coordinate effective risk-informed policy and action. CSOs should benefit from investment that empowers local communities in processes of power shifting and capacity building. Furthermore, the UNFCCC and the COP host countries should work together to put in place favourable and tangible conditions for the participation of CSOs in national delegations' contributions to climate negotiations. In this respect, GNDR is concerned by reports from our members that civil society badge allocation for in-person attendance at COP28 has decreased significantly compared to COP27. Virtual attendance is no substitute for in-person attendance, particularly for CSOs from the global south whose voices need to be heard and whose representatives need to engage with their peers in global policy spaces. Only through such engagement can we achieve meaningful and effective action on climate change adaptation at a global level.

3. Increase allocation of financial resources at the local level

Finance - the critical enabler for accelerated climate action - must reach local communities who themselves should be central to decision making around how it is spent. It is essential to allocate sufficient resources towards enhancing the ability of communities to adapt to climate change and build resilience - and to do so transparently. We must mobilise resources to support climate action - particularly in developing countries - to bridge the funding gap while ensuring fair access and avoiding undue bureaucracy. This includes investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, promoting resilient agriculture practices, ensuring access to clean water, providing support through social safety nets, facilitating anticipatory action and the timely release of pre-arranged finance, making meaningful commitments on loss and damage, and more. Importantly, GNDR members urge policymakers to revisit and radically scale

up their commitments under the Grand Bargain, particularly regarding quality financing and power-shifting.

4. Promote inclusion across local to global levels of climate change decision making

Meaningful inclusion across all decision making levels on climate change involves taking a 'whole-of-society' approach and including those less visible, less heard, and most vulnerable to ensure no one is left behind in tackling the climate crisis. GNDR and members reiterate our previous calls to create and enhance spaces to meaningfully participate in decision making processes for women, youth, elderly, Indigenous Peoples, persons living with disabilities, displaced populations, and other often marginalised communities. Climate change impacts disproportionately affect marginalised groups and deepen existing inequalities. A focus on equity ensures that access to the needs of all is assured and resources are fairly shared to ensure the viability of the planet for the future generations. Our members are calling for greater inclusion.

5. Mainstream climate and disaster risk-informed development into national planning and Official Development Assistance (ODA)

Investing in climate adaptation and disaster reduction isn't just an ethical imperative, it is the smart economic choice and the best way to invest in security and safety for all. The recent collapse of the dams in Libya and the ensuing loss of lives, livelihoods and infrastructure is a highly visible and tragic example of the importance of risk-informed development. As climate-induced disasters become ever more commonplace, it is imperative that national planning and international development policymakers reinforce existing critical infrastructure, plan for the future, and support resilient infrastructure and industries that future-proof our lives, livelihoods, societies and economies. Supporting disaster risk reduction efforts, an increased emphasis on anticipatory actions and the establishment of early warning systems are essential to ensure that the benefits of risk informed development are realised.

6. Strengthen climate and disaster risk reduction efforts in fragile and conflict affected settings.

Increasing stress on natural and financial resources exacerbates tensions at local and global levels - and our members report that this phenomenon is particularly acute in fragile and conflict-affected areas. As such there is a greater need to ensure a greater proportion of climate finance is channelled to such settings. This includes removing barriers to access, tailoring financing mechanisms accordingly and, importantly, ensuring that all new and existing adaptation and mitigation finance is conflict sensitive,

especially in fragile settings. Strengthening climate and disaster risk reduction efforts in fragile and conflict-affected areas is not only essential for climate change adaptation but also a critical element of global peace and stability.

7. Operationalise a Loss and Damage Fund that meets the needs of those most affected by climate change and disasters

As climate threats escalate, prioritising substantial, timely, and accessible funding to support those most vulnerable to climate change is more than a moral duty - it's an existential imperative. The L&D fund and funding arrangements adopted in Sharm El Sheikh are vital to this process and need to be operationalised immediately. GNDR members are calling for immediate measures to address the scale of L&D finance including commitments for new and additional climate finance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction needs of impacted communities to ensure that communities are equipped with the necessary tools to build resilience against future risk. This includes: an independent fund; timely, flexible, predictable, multi-year funding support for both rapid- and slow-onset impacts; inclusive and equitable access to L&D finance (especially in the global south); commitment and accountability from historical polluters to provide grant-based funding which is new and additional to existing ODA. These efforts should address both economic and non-economic loss and damage. Meanwhile, GNDR is proud to support UNDRR/UNOPS' joint bid to host the Santiago Network for L&D.

8. Preserve and restore ecosystems and biodiversity as resources to reduce disasters and limit the impact of crises

Our natural ecosystems are crucial for absorbing carbon emissions, regulating climate patterns, and providing vital resources. Resilience against climate-induced disaster, especially in the context of building and sustaining resilient infrastructure that embraces Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and hybrid approaches, is vital for countries to adapt and recover from hazards without compromising long-term prospects of development. As such, we call for the strengthening of legal frameworks and policies that protect ecosystems and biodiversity and ensure conservation and restoration as integral parts of mitigation and adaptation strategies. With much to learn from existing practices at the local level, it is more important than ever to invest in and scale up nature-based approaches that avert and mitigate extreme events while minimising their impact.