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SHE Changes Climate: COP28 closing statement for immediate release

## **Major decision taken at COP28 to transition away from fossil fuels by 2030 but more to be done to accelerate implementation and improve gender balance**

**14 December 2023 | Dubai, UAE:** SHE Changes Climate acknowledges a major agreement as per the decision adopted today at COP28 in Dubai to transition away from fossil fuels in this critical decade. Yet we continue to call for a more inclusive process, both at global level and country level. Women leaders are at the forefront of climate diplomacy, but are yet to be recognised fully. Women must also be at the heart of design and implementation of the just energy transition pathways at the country level. Inclusion and diversity are essential to design and implement these pathways to make sure no one is left behind.

For two weeks, women leaders, negotiators and civil society leaders have gathered in a strongly united global movement to address the climate emergency and the need for the immediate phase-out of fossil fuels as a crucial step to limit global warming to a 1.5 degree temperature increase.

This is also the result of outstanding female leadership and an unprecedented level of mobilization for fast-tracking the energy transition, slashing emissions by 2030 and co-creating a fossil-free energy future for all.

The [Unite For Climate Solutions Summit](#), which was convened by SHE Changes Climate and Project Dandelion on 21 November 2023, featured a closing dialogue between Mary Robinson and COP28 President H.E. Sultan Al Jaber, and shed light on the crucial need to address the fossil fuel issue in line with climate science. This information has been widely broadcasted by the media, emphasized by women and climate organizations and backed by climate scientists in a strong and united call for greater climate ambition. The UNFCCC has taken it into account, and for the first time in 28 years, COP has focused on fossil fuels.

There is no debate that we still need to move faster to the total phase out of fossil fuels that is clear and complete. In particular, there are several loopholes that still need to be addressed, including the run-away false solution of carbon capture and storage. It is also urgent to stop building new coal-power plants, hence going further than phasing down unabated coal.

**Women leaders must now be at the forefront of the just energy transition to ensure clean energy access for all and scaled up financial resources at country level**

We also welcome the inclusion of gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity in the Global Stock Take decision, as well as in the Just Transition Pathways decision.

It is now urgent to move much faster on the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and make sure the energy transition pathways are developed through an inclusive and participatory process at country level.

We welcome the decision to implement “inclusive and participatory approaches to just transitions that leave no one behind”. Inclusive, open multi stakeholder dialogues are essential to emerge with a truly systemic transformation of society.

We are further pleased to announce that the Netherlands, Uganda, and Norway have joined the coalition of gender champions during this COP, following the example of the IFRC and other Non-State Actors that have endorsed the [inclusion and diversity principles](#).

SHE Changes Climate is planning to strengthen its presence and action on the ground in key countries, to accelerate the energy transition and make sure women are forefront and center in this transition.

We also welcome the new financial goals and pledges that have been put on the table at COP, including the adaptation needs of USD 215-387 billion annually up to 2030, and USD 4.3 trillion per year needs to be invested in clean energy up until 2030, increasing thereafter to USD 5 trillion per year up until 2050, to be able to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

We now must ensure that the funding gets to the people and communities that need it the most at the country and local levels especially in the most vulnerable countries.

**COP 28 falls short of the need for recognizing the pioneering work of women leaders and there is still an urgent need to make the UNFCCC COP process more inclusive**

SHE Changes Climate was disappointed to see the way the COP28 closing plenary was handled by H.E. Sultan Al Jaber. We believe that H.E. Hana Al Hashimi and H.E. Razan Al Mubarak have worked both tirelessly and diligently in the preceding months in preparation, and yet no credit or visibility has been given to them.

We also regret that H.E. Sultan Al Jaber was not able to fully acknowledge and listen to the statement made by Anne Rasmussen, Samoa's Lead Delegate and spokesperson for small island nations. The perspective of women and island nations need to be held at the forefront of decision making. How to build a more inclusive negotiating process needs continued commitment. Our belief is that the methodology of more inclusive and authentic "circles of trust" could greatly improve the negotiation process.

**As a growing women-led movement for climate justice, SHE Changes Climate will continue to unite and act for greater climate ambition and action beyond COP28, in the lead-up to COP29 in Azerbaijan and COP30 in Brazil.**

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**Further comments from SHE Changes Climate network:**

*"The COP 28 agreement marks a cautious stride forward, yet also reveals loopholes in its intent for implementation. Climate finance commitments and pledges have been considerably increased but we must make sure that financial resources do trickle down to the people who need it the most. The onus now lies heavily on national governments to translate this into action. For nations like India, foreseeing the high risks of fossil fuel phase-out, this presents an opportunity to champion a just transition, and therefore the pivotal role of women in decision making and leadership is essential. Safeguarding the rights of the Indigenous people, the most vulnerable, women, and youth should have been more clearly committed in the text."* - **Mamta Borgoyary, SHE Changes Climate Co-Director**

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*"This is a major milestone. In nearly 30 years of climate negotiations, I had never seen such a massive mobilization for the phase out of fossil fuels. The unanimous decision to transition away from fossil fuels in this critical decade is definitely a step in the right direction and a strong political signal to the world. Women leaders from all five continents have played a major role to make this happen, in an unprecedented united call to phase out fossil fuels and excellent diplomatic coordination on the ground at COP28. We still need to go further and move quickly to accelerate action at the country level to ensure a just energy transition for all, leaving no one behind, with women at the forefront of this transition. I also wish that more visibility and political credit had been given to the outstanding leadership of H.E. Hana Al Hashimi and H.E. Razan Al Mubarak. The COP28 closing was still terribly male dominated. We have more work to do to make the COP process much more inclusive and gender-balanced, including at the top level. I look forward to seeing COP30 in Brazil being the COP of a women's leadership, ideally with Marina Silva as COP President, as well as triple wins for climate, people and nature, better interconnecting all the Rio Conventions."* **Elise Buckle, SHE Changes Climate Co-Founder and Co-Director**

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*“While the text has moved forward and passed, the process has been a failure, led by the incredible leadership of Pacific Island Nations that continue to hold the line. The text is an improvement but we continue to have a small window of keeping below 1.5 to stay alive is rapidly closing.*

*This is just one mechanism in safeguarding a just and equitable future for all people on the frontlines of the climate crises, and there are still gaps within the text that is required to strengthen global action from Nation states, developed and G20 countries.*

*While this is a step and there is acknowledgment of transition away from fossil fuels, we need to note it doesn't specifically state phase out of fossil fuels. We need to phase out fossil fuels meaning no dangerous distractions like carbon capture and storage technology, greenwashed clean gas or blue hydrogen. We need fast and immediate action to stop new gas, coal and oil projects so we can keep in line with limiting global warming to 1.5, starting yesterday. Within my lifetime my communities could become climate refugees. The global North needs to lead in phasing out first and the fastest in order for this process to be fair. And we need more ambitious commitments from developed and G20 nations for financial resources so that everyone can transition. We still have a long way to go, but we have seen the power and love from our indigenous, First Nations, island state communities right across the globe holding their power and holding the line.”* **Tishiko King, Our Islands Our Home First Nations Program Manager and SHE Changes Climate Ambassador Australia**

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*“This outcome is both historic and insufficient. Historic because we finally have a climate agreement that recognizes that the climate crisis is caused by oil, gas and coal. Insufficient because it includes loopholes that provide cover for continued growth in fossil fuels. It's not a transition if we are growing the problem. This deal fails to end expansion of fossil fuels and ensure a cleaner safer future is financed and fair. Women and children are the first to be impacted by the ravages of climate change. More fossil fuels means more climate impacts.”* **Tzeporah Berman, Chair Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative**

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*“To hail this as significant progress, when our ecosystems are collapsing, just shows how low expectations really were for this [#COP28](#). That people would celebrate a text weak on substance, with no urgency, enough funding or phase out of fossil fuels - is staggering. I applaud all of you who were there trying to fight the many vested interests stacked against a liveable future for us all.”* **Princess Esmeralda of Belgium**

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*“Spiritual intervention through rituals and healing is needed at all levels to bring earth balance and world peace in this crucial time. I plead for world leaders, negotiators, policymakers and the business community to be serious about green climate solutions and urgently take on the responsibilities of agents of change. We need to keep on advocating for inclusion, recognition and representation for indigenous, grassroots and marginalized communities globally.*

*Financial support is critically needed for adaptation and mitigation training for vulnerable communities to better prepare themselves for the growing climate threats. At COP 28 the divide was absolutely visible. The voices echoed by those who needed to be heard must be taken seriously. Cries for Cease Fire, Justice for All. Support for healing from mental illnesses and post trauma caused by natural and man*

made disasters were heard. The cries were almost everywhere for financing to deal with the growing stresses of the Climate Crisis. The call for earth balance, equality and equity from our young people as they highlighted their needs and concerns to implement change at all levels, environmental, social, political and cultural.

Climate financing is immediately needed for the transition from fossil fuel dependent to clean, green and smart renewable solutions. This is where Indigenous knowledge and life ways can help society adapt to the shift. The revised global stocktake reflected on some more realistic timeline for change. For me, while the clock is ticking, action is slow. It also showed that inclusion of input from small island communities were taken into consideration. It also highlighted that the total end of dependency on fossil fuel will take some time. Some of the languages I am still trying to understand. My direction is to decolonize climate. What I am also suggesting is that pressure must be placed on the business communities that depend on fossil fuels to inject financing into renewable energy projects before the money ends.

Some of the language used shows that directions by scientists to keep to the 1.5 target needs to be amplified as it speaks to transitioning from fossil fuel dependency, I vision in doing so vulnerable communities will be at stake” **Akilah Jaramogi, Indigenous Leader and SHE Changes Climate Ambassador Trinidad and Tobago**

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“India’s commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2070 is 20 years behind global targets. The pressing need to halt the construction of new coal power plants is evident. This is a critical weak point in the strategy, as ‘phasing down’ unabated coal falls short of the urgency required. The impact on women in the energy sector is profound, with around 13 million people in India dependent on coal, and 2/3rds of rural households relying on fossil fuels, exposing women and children to significant health hazards.

The emphasis must shift urgently towards stopping the construction of new coal power plants, acknowledging the weakness in the ‘phasing down’ approach, and must move to ‘phasing out’ unabated coal to ensure a more effective and sustainable pathway.

Recognising the patriarchal nature of the fossil fuel industry, the shutdown of coal mines and plants needs careful management to prevent disproportionate impacts on women. A gender-inclusive, just transition, connecting SDG 5 and SDG 7, becomes imperative to provide clean energy access and empower women in sustainable energy roles. This comprehensive approach is vital for a fair and timely transition to a sustainable future.” **Shreya Ghodawat, SHE Changes Climate Ambassador India**

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“We see a huge number of youths participating on the country delegate badge this year at COP28 which shows that youth voices have been identified and they are given a platform. This itself is a remarkable step for Global South Countries. However, youths’ voices have been lacking in the negotiation room. Today’s youths are the ones who are actually working at the grassroots level for the community, so they are well aware of the problems and they know the innovative green solution as well, however what they need is negotiation training. As youths are our bright future, we need to make sure that they learn these negotiation processes and they have their seats in the negotiation room. Getting a country badge is a big step but we have a long journey still left to be there one day in the negotiation room. We have been fighting and we will be fighting for our rights, for our voices to be heard and we believe we will be there

*one day in the negotiation room, negotiating rightfully for climate justice".* **Shristi Adhikari, SHE Changes Climate Ambassador Nepal**

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*In the interests of dialogue and relationship building, would SCC consider a follow up discussion with HEs Dr Sultan Al-Jaber, Hana Al Hashimi and Razan Al Mubarak to discuss the outcome, especially in the light of the earlier publicity around the exchange between Mary Robinson and Dr Sultan Al-Jaber.* **Janet Salisbury, Women's Climate Congress, Australia**

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*The progress that has been made with the COP28 agreement is important but with a "litany of loopholes" is still not enough. We don't have time for incremental change over long periods of time - we need more bold, decisive action to drive the transformational shifts required to phase out fossil fuels now. Going forward, we need courageous leaders who can drive change and hold space for more collaborative and inclusive processes. We need more women in the room, on the stage and at the table; women are the first movers, innovators and early adopters when it comes to climate solutions. Women listen to science. How are we not talking about how the countries that handled the COVID pandemic best were led by women? Shifting women's voices, perspectives and lived experiences from the frontlines of climate change to the forefront of climate leadership can drive the solutions the planet and humanity desperately need in times of crisis. Finally, we need more fit-for-purpose gender-just climate finance that supports locally-led climate adaptation and builds resilience in the most vulnerable climate-impacted communities.* **Carey Bohjanen, The Rallying Cry**

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*Critical climate tipping points in the polar regions will be triggered at +1.5C. This is a physical limit not a political target. The COP28 agreement recognises this as a defense line but paradoxically only argues for a transition away from fossil fuels rather than a phase-out. Words matter because they provide the wiggle room for business as usual. Phase-out must start now.* **Professor Gail Whiteman, University of Exeter Business School & Founder/Executive Director, Arctic Basecamp, UK/Netherlands**

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*"We are happy to see the loss and damage fund operationalized; but how did we get here? We need to fast track a just phase-out of fossil fuels. We can not continue treating symptoms while the underlying cause persists".* **Stephen Bright Sakwa, Head of Mentorship & Advocacy, SHE Changes Climate**

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*"Engaging in COP 28 and witnessing a significant outcome that reflects progress, we recognize the substantial strides required for a truly inclusive representation of women, youth, and marginalized communities. It is imperative to guarantee nature's representation at the table. Above all, we assert that true progress is discernible in the tangible execution of commitments. We are committed to collaborating closely with institutions and the private sector to ensure that groundbreaking solutions, such as our innovative use of technology to redefine nature's value, garner full support in addressing our shared challenges."* **Catherine Bischoff, CEO Sovereign Nature Initiative, The Netherlands**

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*“The vague acknowledgement that coal, oil and gas have had their day saves COP28 from being a total failure, but the inability of countries to agree to phase out fossil fuels in the face of an ever worsening climate crisis is proof of a global leadership vacuum and our continued dependency on an extractive economic model. We know that 74% of G20 citizens are looking for a new economic model that embraces greater well being based on equity, gender diversity, social and environmental capital needs. It is clear that the only way we will bring in a new value based economy is by anchoring more female leadership across all decision making from climate to trade to economics. This effort is at the heart of the SHE Changes Climate and Dandelion movements.”* **Sandrine Dixson-Decleve, Co President, The Club of Rome & SHE Changes Climate Ambassador Belgium**

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*“The inclusive nature of this COP was commendable, and indeed a turning point based on the acknowledgements and commitments made — but this is only just the beginning, and now climate leaders and governments must stay true to their word, knowing that the future of our planet is dependent on the decisions they make... now and in the coming weeks.”* **Natalie Sifuma, Head of Communications - SHE Changes Climate**

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*“Women are disproportionately harmed by climate impacts, yet they continue to be grossly underrepresented in the COP process. To make urgently needed progress on moving away from fossil fuels, we need a more gender-balanced leadership to safeguard vulnerable populations and make sure no one is left behind. We know that when women lead, build, and deliver climate solutions, whole communities benefit.”* **Kathy Baughman McLeod, CEO, Climate Resilience for All.**

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*“While explicitly mentioning the transition “away from fossil fuels” – albeit with [plenty of loopholes, ambiguous language, and missing commitments](#) – this hard-won step forward for the international community in the outcome text of COP28 is unfortunately [too little, too late](#). It underlines the urgent need to [upgrade planetary climate governance](#) to ensure reliability and efficacy, in the interests of **global public safety**. The Climate Governance Commission, working closely with Lead co-chair Mary Robinson, Co-Chairs Maria Fernanda Espinosa, and Johan Rockström, and other prominent like-minded leaders – where women’s voices are crucial – will work tirelessly in the COP28 follow-up, to advocate for and implement a “top 10” near-term and “top 5” next generation governance improvements set out in [its 2023 Report](#) to ensure that current and future generations are keep within a planetary ‘safe operating space’.”* – **Maja Groff, Esq., Convenor, [Climate Governance Commission](#), Co-Winner of the International New Shape Prize on Global Governance Innovation, Senior Treaty Advisor, Integrity Initiatives International**

#WomenLeaders #UniteForClimate

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