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In the Asia-Pacific, the oceans sustain the majority of the world's small-scale fishers, coastal and island communities and Indigenous Peoples. They depend on the marine and coastal biodiversity for livelihoods, nutrition, health, decent work and cultural identity - basically for their dignified life. Not only are oceans pivotal for livelihoods and survival but these also play vital roles in climate governance. They support climate mitigation, being the major carbon sinks, absorbing 20-30% of carbon dioxide gas and 90% of excess heat caused by global warming. Oceans also support climate adaptation through mangroves, coral reefs, sea grasses which act as a natural buffer and regulator, reducing and delaying the climate impacts of storm damage, coastal flooding, sea level rise and so on. However, there is growing recognition that oceans are increasingly being used to justify new forms of extraction and corporate control under the language of climate action. These climate functions must not be misused to reduce oceans to carbon sinks, offset sites, or financial assets for polluters and investors and those causing climate crises. Oceans are living ecosystems and the basis of collective survival, food sovereignty, culture, and self-determination for coastal and island communities, Indigenous Peoples, small-scale fishers, and women across the region.

At the same time, the ability of the oceans to support climate mitigation and adaptation is gradually hindered due to the huge impacts of climate change. The oceans are warming, with the increase in marine heatwaves and sea level rise which triggers coral bleaching, deoxygenation while ocean acidification is destroying biota and disrupting marine eco-systems. This is not only an environmental crisis, but a climate crisis, as the destruction of marine and coastal ecosystems directly weakens communities adaptive capacity and deepens existing inequalities. This results in reducing the adaptation capacity of indigenous, coastal and island communities who rely on fish and sea food, food sovereignty and alternative income sources such as community led eco-tourism, sea- weed farming etc leading to the disruption of their entire livelihoods. For women and marginalized groups, these impacts are compounded by unpaid care work, insecure tenure, exclusion from decision making, and limited access to climate finance, compensation, recovery support and technologies.

Governments, corporations and international financial institutions increasingly promote market driven and techno fix solutions that repackage business as usual extractions and profit making through the language of mitigation, adaptation, resilience, conversation, renewable energy, and just transition. The Blue Economy is also promoted as one of the strategies to address climate change, including through ocean-based mitigation, adaptation, blue finance, blue carbon, conservation, renewable energy, marine geoengineering, carbon dioxide removal, and coastal resilience, while in practice it has often been serving the investment interests and resource extractions, and risky technological experimentation. The oceans have in fact become a new frontier for exercising monopoly, corporate control, plunder and extraction of marine resources under the banner of environmental protection, climate action, carbon sequestration, resilience, low-carbon development, and just transition.

Across the region, these projects are already displacing communities, restricting access to marine resources, and undermining climate resilience and biodiversity. Many of the climate development plans/policies and projects are introduced in the name of adaptation, coastal protection, resilience, renewable energy, green logistics, eco-tourism and low-carbon development, including giant sea

walls, reclamations, land bridges, ports, floating solar systems, marine protection areas, blue carbon projects, and other infrastructure that relies on the exploration, expansion and extraction of ocean resources. These projects and policies not only cause ocean degradation and biodiversity loss but also have detrimental gendered impacts on the women, fisheries, coastal and island communities and indigenous peoples who face socio-economic inequalities, political marginalization, including restricted access to ocean resources, eviction, forced displacement, conflict and violence. When these projects are designed without human rights, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and community leadership, they do not strengthen climate resilience; they in fact undermine it. These impacts worsen the climate crisis and further decrease the adaptive capacity and resilience of women and frontline communities who often bear the greatest burden.

In the name of just transition and climate action, the ocean is increasingly exploited under the “blue economy” and “blue finance” models marketed as climate solutions. These models promote and prioritise the commodification of the commons and expand the blue bonds, blue carbon trading and marine protected areas, marine geoengineering, carbon dioxide removal schemes, and other market-based or high-risk mechanisms for the short-term monetary profits, while allowing polluters and wealthy countries to delay real emissions reductions and avoid their climate finance obligations. In Laguna de Bay, Philippines, a proposed 2,000-hectare floating solar project has been promoted as a renewable energy and climate change mitigation initiative. However, local fisherfolk have raised concerns about inadequate consultation, potential displacement from traditional fishing grounds, and the project's environmental impacts on the lake ecosystem and their livelihoods.¹ There is also no guarantee that the benefits of electricity generated will reach local communities. This shows how even projects labelled as mitigation can become false solutions when they displace communities, ignore rights, and fail to assess ecological, social, gendered, and livelihood impacts. [In Raja Ampat, West Papua, nickel mining is aggressively carried out to supply raw materials for electric vehicles and solar energy systems](#)², promoted under the global energy transition. This exposes the contradiction of a so-called green or low-carbon transition that destroys marine ecosystems, fisheries, Indigenous territories, and community livelihoods in the Global South. This exposes how the common heritages are turned into speculative assets for profit making in the name of transitioning towards renewables without addressing the deeper questions of overconsumption, corporate control, historical responsibility, and justice.

International financial institutions, big corporations, and global north governments play a huge role in supporting this corporate control over marine resources and protecting and profiteering from their investment flows into these false solutions. They justify their increase in military expenditure for naval expansion and maritime security operations in the name of protecting trade routes, investment flows, ports, and strategic ocean spaces, while exerting coercive power on communities and violating the rights of the environmental human rights defenders. While doing so, they completely shy away from their obligations under common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), including the obligation of developed countries to provide adequate, predictable, public and grant-based climate finance to the Global South. Instead, they have been pushing the burden of mitigation, adaptation and response to loss and damage onto the climate vulnerable global south countries and frontline communities, including women, Indigenous Peoples, small-scale fishers, and coastal and island communities.

The Blue Economy is framed as “growth from the ocean, while protecting nature and tackling climate change.” [It boasts of contributing \\$1.5 trillion annually to global GDP, projected to reach \\$3 trillion by 2030](#).³ This growth narrative hides the fact that many Blue Economy projects are being advanced as climate solutions while reproducing debt, extraction, displacement, and corporate capture. However, the World Bank's Thailand Resilient Transport Connectivity and Irrawaddy Dolphin Conservation Project, framed within Blue Economy and resilient connectivity narratives, includes the 7 kilometer

¹ Rappler. (2024). *Laguna de Bay fishers demand inclusion in floating solar project*. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/luzon/laguna-de-bay-fisherfolk-demand-inclusion-floating-solar-project/>

² Mongabay. (2024). *Nickel mining threatens Raja Ampat's marine and forest ecosystems in Indonesia's clean energy rush*. <https://www.mongabay.com/>

³ https://www.eria.org/uploads/media/Research-Project-Report/RPR-2023-17/06_Chapter-1-The-Blue-Economy-in-South-East-Asia.pdf

Songkhla Lake Bridge connecting Songkhla and Phatthalung provinces and Irrawaddy dolphin conservation activities and is partly supported by PROBLUE. The project is expected to impact at least 20 communities surrounding the Songkhla Lake, including through declining fish stocks and threats to traditional livelihoods.. This will ultimately push the fishers to change their occupation and seek work in other informal sectors. Such impacts weaken community resilience and shift the costs of climate-labelled development onto those already facing climate risks. In the same way, expansion of industrial shrimp aquaculture for export oriented business in Bangladesh and India also damages fishing grounds that families have relied on for generations, while being promoted under blue growth, food security, or climate-resilient livelihood narratives. In Indonesia, Karimunjawa islands are opened for industrial aquaculture and tourism owned by foreign investors, often under the language of sustainable tourism and blue growth. In some cases, up to 90% of these islands are privately owned. Moreover, the government asserts its power through the military to protect these businesses which destroy the ecosystems, undermine small-scale, subsistence economies, violate human rights and women-led initiatives. This is being done for the benefit of a few, at the expense of planetary health, climate justice, and the well-being of present and future generations.

The ocean is already under extreme pressure; it must not become a testing ground for speculative interventions. Marine geoengineering including marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) and deep sea mining pose unprecedented and unacceptable risks to marine ecosystems, biodiversity, and frontline communities. These scientifically unproven and high-risk technologies threaten fragile marine ecosystems, disrupt natural carbon sequestration, and accelerate marine biodiversity loss, often without transparent regulation, accountability, or the meaningful participation of affected communities. True climate ambition lies in rapid, real, and equitable emissions cuts at source, and the protection and restoration of ocean ecosystems, not marine manipulation or speculative carbon removal. The climate crisis cannot be solved through technological or market interventions when the structural drivers of extraction, overconsumption, militarism, and inequality remain intact.

We stand in solidarity with and call for full protection of all women and environmental human rights defenders who are putting their lands, waters, and lives often at great risk. We stand with all the women who are leading the defence of our oceans and advancing real climate solutions: challenging extraction, defending food sovereignty, protecting marine ecosystems and sustaining community-led climate resilience.

Our Key Feminist Climate Justice Demands for the ocean dialogue happening in Bonn are:

- Reject the 'blue economy' models that accelerate ocean grabbing, ocean degradation, and false climate solutions such as carbon markets, blue carbon trading which contradicts our common concern for present and future generations.
- End the extraction and exploitation of Global South resources and hold international financial institutions (IFIs) like World Bank, IMF, ADB as well as corporations and wealthy countries, accountable for environmental, social, gendered and climate harms.
- Prohibit deep sea mining, marine geoengineering, marine carbon dioxide removal, and other high risk and potential disastrous technologies that threaten marine ecosystems, biodiversity, food sovereignty, and the rights of frontline communities.
- Stop existing and planned military activities, exercises, and testing in the ocean which have detrimental impacts on marine and coastal ecosystems, fisheries, coastal communities, livelihoods, human rights, and climate resilience.
- Provide Climate Finance 'related to ocean and coasts' which should be ambitious, reliable, predictable, accountable, transparent, public, and grant-based, grounded in solidarity, gender justice, human rights, meaningful engagement and participation, and directly accessible and beneficial for those most affected by the ocean-climate-biodiversity crisis. It must check, address and quantify gendered impacts, including impacts on women's long-term income, direct access to finance, land and marine tenure, care work, health, safety and decision making power. Strong safeguards and accessible grievance mechanisms must be set up.

- Ocean-based climate action must incorporate Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) with full, inclusive and meaningful participation, and decision making power of Indigenous Peoples, small-scale fishers, women, and coastal and island communities in all climate, conservation, technology, finance, and development projects affecting their lands, waters, territories and livelihoods.
- Ensure explicit and full recognition and representation of small-scale fishers and their coastal communities in all ocean-related mechanisms and policies, in particular under the UNFCCC, CBD and BBNJ, while recognising the rights and role of women as vital guardians of food sovereignty, livelihoods, culture, tenure, and marine and coastal biodiversity.
- Advance a gender-transformative, rights-based, and ecosystem-based approach to ocean and climate governance, combining science, traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, local communities, and small-scale fisheries, and inclusive policies. This approach must restore ocean health, build climate resilience, protect biodiversity, uphold food sovereignty, and advance women's human rights and gender equality.
- Ensure the formal inclusion of women's leadership and gender justice as a central pillar of marine and climate governance, with dedicated, direct, and flexible funding for women-led initiatives. Women's voices, knowledge, leadership, and human rights must shape ocean and climate governance at all levels.
- Advance a just and equitable transition that prioritises people's needs, food sovereignty, sustainable livelihoods, care, rights, and ecosystem integrity rather than profit, overconsumption, and corporate controlled 'green' and 'blue' growth.