Real Zero Europe

STATEMENT

To avoid the worst effects of climate chaos, we must radically transform, equitably and justly, the way we produce our food, manage our ecosystems, and power our economies. We must urgently deploy real and proven, socially just and people-led solutions and dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions at source, down to Real Zero.

Because emissions are cumulative, every ton of current emissions contributes to the growing climate chaos that we see all around the world: heat waves, glaciers collapsing, intensified cyclones, crop losses, wildfires, and massive flooding, among other devastating impacts.

Yet fossil-drenched and fossil-entrenched government and corporate interests keep subsidizing, producing, and burning fossil fuels. Their latest greenwashing fantasy is that ‘nature-based solutions’ and future technologies of ‘carbon dioxide removal’ (CDR) will suck vast amounts of ongoing carbon pollution back out of the atmosphere some day. Their strategy assumes an overshoot of 1.5 °C, with just a possibility of returning to safe temperature levels, putting all of the planet at risk from the serious consequences of overshoot that the IPCC has warned about in its latest report.

**In this strategy, every ton of promised future CDR represents emissions that are bringing us more climate chaos today.**

The plan that the European Commission (EC) put forward in December 2021 in their Communication on Sustainable Carbon Cycles contributes to this strategy. In the communication, the EC proposes a regulatory process at the EU-level to certify carbon removals and create a credit that then could be traded in carbon offset markets. **Future CDR and carbon-offset markets are smokescreens for current inaction.**

In the plan, the EC promotes two types of CDR. The first is the temporary storage of carbon in fields and forests—called ‘carbon farming’—as a means to address ongoing emissions, including the permanent emissions of fossil fuels. But temporary ‘nature-based’ sequestration is not interchangeable with and cannot compensate for fossil emissions that stay in the atmosphere and contribute to warming for hundreds to thousands of years.
The Commission is also promoting technological approaches, including direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCs) and bioenergy carbon capture and storage (BECCS). These technologies are not currently viable at scale AND have potentially enormous social, environmental, and economic risks and costs from their very high energy and resource consumption as well as from the transport and storage of carbon dioxide.

Both carbon farming and BECCS, should it ever become feasible at scale, also pose huge risks for land-speculation and land-grabbing from small-scale farmers and peasants, threatening food sovereignty in the EU and around the world.

The European Commission’s direction of travel completely ignores the past and current failures of carbon offset markets to deliver either emissions reductions or the finance needed for a real and just transition away from fossil-based economies. A carbon removals-offset market benefits polluters most of all. It relies on a dangerous and false justification for continuing emissions: that someone, somewhere, might at sometime in the future remove a ton of carbon from the atmosphere. It is a sure way to torch the planet.

Future CDR cannot serve as a substitute for deep emissions reductions now. To stay below 1.5 °C of warming, requires real, just, and immediate reductions. A strategy to overshoot 1.5°C and bet on temporary removals and currently non-existent technologies to return someday to safe global temperatures is a strategy of climate disaster.

Europe has a huge historical responsibility to support a just transition for the Global South, and to rapidly bring emissions down to Real Zero at home. We know what Real Zero looks like: a just and equitably managed phase-out of fossil fuels; an energy transformation to real, fair, democratic, and sustainable renewable energy; support for small-scale farmers and a just transition of food and agricultural systems towards agroecology for food sovereignty; close-to-nature forestry practices; and the redirection of public subsidies, away from fossils, to support these measures.

Getting to Real Zero and staying below 1.5 °C of warming requires rejecting any European Commission proposal for certifying carbon removal offsets in a failed carbon market. It requires halting emissions and restoring ecosystems now.

Initial Signatories

Biofuelwatch
BUND / Friends of the Earth Germany
CCFD - Terre Solidaire
CEO - Corporate Europe Observatory
CIEL - Center for International Environmental Law
Corporate Accountability
European Coordination Via Campesina
Fern
Food & Water Action Europe
Friends of the Earth Europe
Friends of the Earth International
Global Forest Coalition
Heinrich Böll Stiftung
IATP - Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy
ReCommon

Also signed by

350.org
Aalem for Orphan and Vulnerable Children, Inc.
AbibiNsroma Foundation ANF
ActionAid International
Actúa por un Mundo Sostenible
Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ)
African Children Empowerment
Agora Association
Aid/Watch
Aitec
Alofa Tuvalu
Andy Gheorghiu Consulting
Association For Promotion Sustainable Development
Association of voluntary actions for society - AVAS
Association pour l'Integration et le Developpement Durable au Burundi, AIDB
Association pour la Conservation et la Protection des Écosystèmes des Lacs et l'Agriculture Durable
ATerra
Attac France
Biowatch South Africa
Boerenforum
Bread for the World, German Protestant Church
Buergerinitiative gegen CO2-Endlager e.V.
BUNDjugend / Young Friends of the Earth Germany
Canopée
Carmelite NGO
CBM Ireland
CEDEUAM - UniSalento
Censat Agua Viva
Centre for Climate Action
Centre for Climate Safety
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo SJ" (CSMM)
CESTA Friends of the Earth El Salvador
Climate Action Campaign Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Climáximo
Coma Sound LTD
Confédération paysanne
Coordination gegen BAYER-Gefahren
Deutsche Umwelthilfe
DPH.MediaArt-Dortmund.de
Earth Action, Inc.
Eco Dharma Network
Eco Ruralis peasant farmers Association
Ecologistas en Acción
EcoNexus
Ecosia GmbH
Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)
Environmental Justice Foundation
Erfurt University of Applied Sciences
Euro Coop
Fachhochschule Erfurt
Farmworker Association of Florida
FDCL - Center for Research and Documentation Chile-Latin America
FECOFUN. Nepal
Feedback EU
Feminist Exchange Network
FIAN Belgium
FIAN Deutschland
FIAN International
Foodjustice
Forests & Finance Coalition
Forests of the World
Forum Ökologie & Papier
Fresh Eyes
Frie Bønder Levende Land
Friends of the Earth France
Friends of the Earth Malta
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Friends of the Earth Spain
Friends of the Earth US
GALBA - Group for Action on Leeds Bradford Airport
Gallifrey Foundation
Gastivists
Global Justice Ecology Project
GLOBAL MEDIA FOUNDATION
Green Finance Observatory
Green Liberty
Greenpeace
Health of Mother Earth Foundation
Humusz Szövetség
IBON International
Igapo Project
Indigenous Environmental Network
Indigenous Peoples Global Forum for Sustainable Development, IPGFforSD
Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ)
Institute for Sustainability, Equity and Resilience
Jordens Vänner / Friends of the Earth Sweden
Justiça Ambiental
Justice Institute Guyana
Kaganga John
Kenya Small Scale Farmers Forum KESSFF
Kilusan para sa Repormang Agraryp at Katarungang Panlipunang (KATARUNGAN)
Klimadelegation e.V.
La Via Campesina Arab and North Africa Region ARNA
LaKunaBi
Law 4 Palestine
Leefmilieu
London Mining Network
MannheimZero
Mazingira Institute
MIJARC Europe
Milieufedensie - Friends of the Earth Netherlands
Movement for Advancing Understanding of Sustainability And Mutuality MAUSAM
National Rural Women Coalition - Philippines
NGO Forum on ADB
No Plastic In My Sea
NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark
Not Here Not Anywhere
ÖBV-Via Campesina Austria
Ole Siosiomaga Society Incorporated (OLSSI)
Partnership for Policy Integrity
People & Planet Edinburgh
Polish Zero Waste Association
PowerShift e.V.
Profundo
Reacción Climática
Réaction en chaîne humaine
Reclame Fossielvrij
Regenerate Hub
Rettet den Regenwald e.V.
Rezero
SchipholWatch
semnar / saatgutpolitik & wissenschaft
SETEM Catalunya
Social Tipping Point Coalitie
SofA Münster (sofortiger Atomausstieg)
Stand.earth
Stay Grounded Network
Stowarzyszenie Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot
Sustainable Development Institute
The Greens Movement of Georgia/FoE Georgia
Third World Network
Toekomstboeren
Transition Crich
Transnational Institute
Tripla Difesa Onlus Guardie Sicurezza Sociale e Eco Zoofile
UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternative)
UDAPT
Union Of Agriculture Work Committees
UNISC International
United Kingdom Without Incineration Network (UKWIN)
Uranium Network
urgewald
Voedsel Anders Nederland
Wall of Women
WomanHealth Philippines
Working group Food Justice
Xnet
Yeşil Çember – ökologisch interkulturell gGmbH
Yorkshire and Humber Climate Justice Coalition
ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável
Zero Waste Europe
Zukunftskonvent Germany