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Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe “Ensuring climate justice, the protection of vulnerable populations and social cohesion in the face of energy instability and international climate disengagement”

Adopted by the General Assembly on 16 April 2026

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe,

Concerned by the intensification of global crises and armed conflicts, particularly in Europe and the Middle East, the repercussions of which threaten energy markets and the security of supply, whether fossil-based or decarbonised;

Deploping the emergence of a global climate divide, the withdrawal of long-standing partners from international treaties and the deliberate choice of carbon, which undermine international solidarity and isolate European efforts.

Warning of the imminent risk of a contraction in public funding dedicated to the green transition, driven by the combined effect of the priority given to defence and security budgets and the sharp decline in financial incentives (clean mobility, solar energy, thermal renovation) observed in many Member States;

Considering the evolution of international commitments at recent Conferences of the Parties, notably:

- The global assessment of COP28 (Dubai) calling for a transition away from fossil fuels;
- The discussions at COP29 (Baku) on the new climate finance target;
- The ambitions of COP30 (Belém) to place urban and territorial justice at the heart of climate action;

Noting, however, a lack of sufficient binding outcomes, coupled with a weakening of public finances, which directly threatens the enjoyment of human rights in the face of the environmental emergency;

Reaffirming that access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy is an essential condition for the effective exercise of fundamental rights (Articles 22 and 25 of the UDHR);

Drawing on the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (*KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland*) and the principles of the Aarhus Convention;

Recalling the Recommendation, addressed by our NGOs to the COP30 negotiators, in favour of a “*just, inclusive and human rights-based energy transition*”;

Urges the representatives of the Member States of the Council of Europe to:

I. Elevate climate justice to the status of a fundamental right

- Reaffirm the inextricable link between the fight against climate change and respect for human rights, ensuring that the transition does not create new forms of precariousness (health, housing, employment).
- Incorporate a principle of non-regression into all national climate and energy policies.
- View carbon-free energy sovereignty as a means of protecting citizens from the geopolitical exploitation of energy and price volatility.
- Mobilise all levers of urban and spatial planning, as well as environmental solutions, to strengthen resilience to climate change

II. Ensure transparency, accountability and social monitoring

- Establish public “Just Transition Dashboards” detailing the use of funds by region to ensure that defence efforts do not come at the expense of climate commitments.
- Make social impact assessments mandatory for all energy projects, including specific indicators such as the actual out-of-pocket costs for households and energy poverty by age, income and region.
- Establish one-stop shops and regional mediators to ensure effective access to support and incentives, particularly for the most vulnerable.

III. Strengthen participatory democracy and local action (the ‘Mutirão’ spirit)

- Ensure the free, prior and informed consent of local communities and support the development of citizen-led energy communities.
- Place local action at the heart of solutions, recognising that the success of the COP30 and SDG objectives depends on the ability of local areas to take ownership of the transition.
- Strengthen support for local authorities in the development and implementation of local plans for social support during the transition.
- Prioritise local, ongoing and structured support, in close collaboration with NGOs and social services.

IV. Ensure fair protection and professional support

- Prioritise support for isolated communities, low-income groups and older people in ‘assistance with thermal adaptation and mobility’.
- Implement robust social protection and early retraining programmes for workers in vulnerable sectors (fossil fuel industries, agriculture), towards jobs of comparable or improved quality.

V. Steering technological adaptability and cost equity

- Highlight the fragility of financial incentives: their sudden reduction, linked to budgetary constraints, severely penalises vulnerable households and citizens already committed to the cause.
- Remove administrative and regulatory barriers to stimulate innovation and the deployment of

low-carbon technologies, to support the competitiveness of businesses in the sector and facilitate the uptake of this energy by households.

- Ensure households have simplified, direct and affordable access to decarbonised energy sources, by turning innovation into a tool for inclusion.
- Prioritise the most affordable, reliable and sustainable technologies to guarantee universal access to energy and move away from unpredictable state subsidies.
- Promote decentralised energy sovereignty solutions (self-consumption, solar mobility) that reduce dependence on heavy infrastructure prone to international tensions, thereby preventing the risk of new digital or social divides.

The Conference of INGOs calls on Member States to promote enhanced social support during the energy transition, which must be fair, participatory and transparent. In the face of complex budgetary trade-offs and international scepticism, the Council of Europe must act as the guarantor of a new social contract in which climate sustainability ensures dignity for all.