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HOME ALLIANCE STATEMENT

A call to reject marine geoengineering and protect oceans at COP31 and beyond

As we approach breaching the critical 1.5°C temperature threshold — a political and moral failure of existential consequence — the same extractive model that has driven the climate system to the brink of collapse is positioning the Ocean as a limitless dumping ground for climate pollution by proposing to manipulate marine biology and chemistry at planetary scale.

The risks of ocean heating, acidification, sea level rise, and the critical role played by traditional stewards of the Ocean are rightfully taking space in the climate arena at COP31. However, as the climate crisis escalates, and the Ocean is being sized up as the next frontier for exploitation, the focus on integrating Ocean action and mitigation under the Paris Agreement is being leveraged to promote highly speculative and risky marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) projects - otherwise known as "geoengineering".

Under the guise of vague terms such as 'Ocean Based Climate Solutions' and 'Ocean Climate Technologies', these highly speculative technologies are being promoted as a 'fix' to manage continued carbon dioxide emissions or even bring temperatures back below 1.5°C.

Already under immense pressure from the impacts of over-exploitation, warming and pollution, these misguided attempts to manipulate the Ocean present incalculable uncertainty and risk, threatening to undermine not only one of the greatest carbon sinks on Earth, but the very cradle of life on Earth.

Marine Carbon Dioxide Removal: profound risks and uncertainties

For a meaningful impact on the climate system, mCDR/geoengineering would need to operate at a global scale over decades, if not centuries, in delicate ocean ecosystems that are already severely stressed by over-exploitation, pollution and climate change – with potentially grave consequences for communities, ocean biodiversity, food chains, fisheries, and even the oceans' natural capacity to sequester carbon.

Marine CDR methods, such as ocean fertilization and **ocean alkalinity enhancement**, could involve dumping material over 10-20% of the [1]Ocean's surface. **Biomass sinking** could compete for over half the world's coastline[2] , while **direct ocean capture** would process thousands of cubic kilometers of seawater, harming or killing the life it contains. Massive infrastructure and supply chains would also have to be developed to meet the extraction, processing, and transportation requirements of these technologies, with associated high energy costs and widespread social and environmental impacts.

There are large uncertainties as to how the Ocean's biology and chemistry would respond to large-scale deployment of mCDR technologies, and whether they would actually effectively store carbon in the oceans. In the case of ocean fertilization, the most researched mCDR approach, results from field trials have pointed in the opposite direction: The technology has shown to be very ineffective at storing carbon in the oceans, but the negative impacts on the marine food web are very real, and **further experiments cannot resolve the inherent uncertainties as to removal potential and harmful impacts.** In addition, there is no reliable way to monitor or verify how much carbon is may actually be removed from the atmosphere and stored in the oceans by any mCDR method.

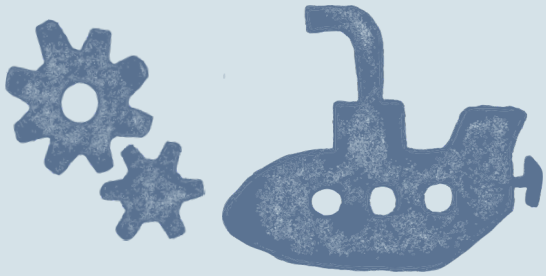
The Ocean knows no borders - **mCDR/geoengineering at scale would be inherently transboundary. Physical, ecological, and social consequences would extend across borders and regions.** Every ocean basin across the globe is targeted for intervention.

1. Boyd, Philip, and Chris Vivian. "High level review of a wide range of proposed marine geoengineering techniques." (2019)

2. Isabella B. Arzeno-Soltero et al., "Large Global Variations in the Carbon Dioxide Removal Potential of Seaweed Farming Due to Biophysical Constraints," Communications Earth & Environment 4, no. 1 (2023): 185, 1, https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-023-00833-2.

For these reasons, marine CDR is subject to the longstanding de facto moratorium under the Convention on Biological Diversity - which has been repeatedly reaffirmed - as well as a regulatory and assessment regime for legitimate scientific research under the London Protocol. Both regimes require that economic interests not influence the design or conduct of a research project, and both bar projects from generating financial or economic gain, such as revenue from the sale of carbon credits

Despite these concerns, governance restrictions and the fact that none of these approaches have been proven effective in the long-term removal and storage of CO_2, there has been a steep increase in experiments in recent years, many of which are driven by the preselling of carbon removal credits - which the Paris Agreement carbon market mechanism risks legitimizing.



Ocean protection, not manipulation!

So-called ocean climate solutions and ocean climate technologies do not address the root causes of ocean warming, acidification and sea level rise. Instead, they risk **entrenching extraction, dumping and appropriation, and further exposing frontline populations**, who have contributed least to the climate crisis to its worst impacts.

Recognizing the **vital role the Ocean and oceanic ecosystems play in regulating the climate system should lead to their stewardship and protection**, not a doubling down on pollution and exploitation. In this moment of deep crisis for the climate, negotiations at the UNFCCC must focus on real, proven solutions and reject false proposals that will only benefit big polluters.

We, as representatives from civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and grassroots organizations from around the world therefore call on governments and COP31 Presidencies to:

- Uphold the long standing and repeatedly reaffirmed de facto moratorium on all climate geoengineering approaches including marine carbon dioxide removals under the Convention on Biological Diversity, noting the Rio Synergies agenda, and the ICJ Climate Change Advisory Opinion affirming that States must consider their obligations under other international environmental treaties, when taking climate action and interpret their obligations under international law harmoniously.

- Avoid vague terminology such as Ocean Climate Solutions and Ocean Climate Technologies in COP31 decisions to shut down any loopholes that marine carbon dioxide removals / geoengineering proponents could exploit.

- Exclude marine carbon dioxide removal credits and all CDR credits from Article 6 mechanisms and Nationally Determined Contributions accounting, and provide for grantbased ocean climate finance in line with fair shares,

- Urgently prioritize community-driven, real solutions to the climate crisis, a just and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels - that must include halting offshore oil and gas activities.

Oceans and seas are crucial for communities and all life on the planet. The Ocean is not a testing ground for profit-driven experiments and carbon market gambling. The HOME Alliance demands a stop to all marine-based geoengineering experiments and further harm to oceans!

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