R8 Green Extractivism is Not a Climate Solution

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Agenda item: 7. Resolutions

Motion text

The energy transition fostered by the European Green Deal is presented as a win-win pathway to combat climate change and sustain economic growth through the deployment of low-carbon technologies (European Commission, 2019). However, the energy transition is a materials transition. Starting from supply of raw materials for technology manufacture, EU demand for rare earth metals is projected to grow six-fold by 2030 and seven-fold by 2050 compared to 2020, reaching over 3 million tonnes in a low-demand scenario and nearly 5 million tonnes in a high-demand scenario (Carrara et al., 2023).

While replacing a fossil-based energy system with a renewables-based one is a necessity and a historical responsibility for the EU, the push to secure resources for the European Green Deal remains rooted in a neoliberal capitalist logic of climate reductionism, prioritising CO2 emissions while overlooking deeper socio-ecological injustices.

Considering that

- mineral extraction comes with severe environmental, social, and health impacts;
- more than 90% of the current raw material supply to Europe comes from outside the Eurozone (European Parliament and Council, 2024);
- more than half of the Strategic Partners for Raw Materials are Europe ex-colonies (Raw Materials Diplomacy, n.d.);
- more than half of energy transition mineral projects are located on or near Indigenous People’s lands (Owen et al., 2022);

We conclude that the EU is transitioning towards a green economy relying on an extractivist model1, and is systematically externalising the costs of the green transition outside of Europe, as well as to its ‘peripheries’2. With this resolution, we aim to amplify the demands of movements who have been resisting this exploitative model inside and outside of Europe.

Recognising the myriad of resistance movements, we want to bring to attention a few examples. Indigenous Peoples in northern Argentina are resisting lithium mining, challenging green extractivism driven by the Global North's energy transition (Argento & Puente, 2023). The "lithium triangle" (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile) supplies about 85% of the EU's lithium imports (Murguia & Obaya, 2024), with extraction encroaching on Indigenous lands and protected areas. Lithium mining generates waste, alters landscapes, contaminates water, and harms local ecosystems. Most critically, its high-water consumption worsens scarcity in arid regions, threatening subsistence farming and pastoralism (Voskoboynik & Andreucci, 2021).

West Papuan tribes, political groups, and civil and customary organisations continue to resist ongoing colonialism, human rights abuses (Amnesty International, 2021), genocidal violence (Brundige et al., 2003; United Liberation Movement for West Papua, 2023), and the extractive exploitation and ecocide of their ancestral lands (United Liberation Movement for West Papua, n.d.). Since 2016, Indonesia and the EU have negotiated the EU–Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), with pressure on Indonesia to lift raw mineral export restrictions and privatise its public energy sector, without consulting West Papuan Indigenous communities.

A new surge of violence in one of the world's most war-torn regions has renewed attention to the historically overexploited peoples and territories of central Africa, particularly in eastern Congo (Global Conflict Tracker, 2025). This resource-rich area has been mined for centuries by Western companies and their subsidiaries. Congo produces 70% of the world's cobalt, a key mineral for the batteries driving Europe's energy transition. With over 200 ethnic groups, it is also one of the most ethnically diverse countries. Amnesty International and local reports document forced evictions, sexual violence, arson, and beatings linked to the expansion of multinational mining operations. These abuses disproportionately harm local communities, undermining their rights and livelihoods (Amnesty International, 2023). Meanwhile, the wealth generated largely leaves the country or is concentrated among a small elite. Though sustainable sourcing standards have been introduced, they are rarely enforced and remain riddled with loopholes (Deberdt & Le Billon, 2022).

This dynamic of dependency extends beyond the Global South: Europe's peripheries, including poorer and rural regions within the EU, are also exploited to fuel growth in the core.

Serbia is witnessing a resurgence of green extractivism through the EU-backed push for lithium mining, despite widespread public resistance that previously halted such projects (Santos, 2024). Behind closed-door agreements and technocratic rhetoric, the government advances a top-down agenda that sidelines affected communities, undermines democratic participation, and replicates authoritarian patterns of resource exploitation (Markovic, 2024). In Portugal,

the green transition is enabling a new wave of extractivism, with lithium mining projects threatening ecologically rich and culturally significant rural areas. Backed by climate and innovation discourses, these projects sideline local opposition and endanger traditional livelihoods. In Covas do Barroso, plans for Europe's largest open-pit lithium mine threaten community displacement and ecosystem destruction (EJAtlas, n.d.). The grassroots movement Unidxs em Defesa de Covas do Barroso is actively resisting this green extractivism, defending a vision of territory grounded in care, heritage, and ecological interdependence (Antonelli & Sini, 2024).

Thus, concerned that

- a greening and security discourse in the European transition agenda hides its reliance on resource appropriation from the Global South and the peripheries of Europe;
- mineral extraction is framed as essential for and compatible with sustainable development and climate change mitigation;
- only 5 Member States of the EU have ratified the ILO169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, protecting the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, including the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent to their relocation;
- the Critical Raw Materials Act limits the rights of Indigenous peoples and communities affected by extraction projects to consultations, ignoring the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent;
- current trade agreements impose an unsustainable neo-liberal European model of development based on infinite economic growth, privatisation of public sectors, nature commodification, and primacy of European import desires over local and national needs and affected communities' rights, while also displacing and disregarding non-Eurocentric knowledge systems and worldviews;

Emphasising again the arguments made in previous FYEG resolutions "Indigenous rights are human rights!", and "A Degrowth Transition Towards Post-Growth Economies" and in FYEG's political platform that

- All trade agreements by the EU and by European countries must respect the rights of the indigenous communities directly or indirectly affected in the counterpart and possibly in neighbouring states. This must entail respect for ILO Convention 169 alongside core human rights conventions. Furthermore, these indigenous communities must be consulted and represented in the discussions and evaluation of the agreement either by a representative or, where possible, a collective or council representing

them;

- The devastation caused by neoliberal capitalism cannot be solved by the same expansionist principles with a green facade. A global political perspective is essential to address ecological injustices and the unequal distribution of impacts. This includes ending resource appropriation from the Global South by the Global North and debt cancellation, alongside urgent decarbonization by countries with the greatest historical emissions.

- Degrowth is a demand for effective decolonization. Countries in the global south should be free to organise their resources and labour around meeting human needs rather than around servicing Northern growth.

We as FYEG call upon

- the EU to question and move beyond a development model based on infinite economic growth, privatisation of commons, nature commodification, and thus extractivism;

- the EU to recognise and interact with different, non-extractive ways of relating to nature stemming from non-Eurocentric worldviews;

- the Greens/EFA to recognise the systemic plunder of resources from the Global South and the peripheries of Europe that is still being promoted by the European energy transition and recognise its unequal distribution of costs and benefits;

- the Greens/EFA to support the demands of resistance and grassroot movements such as those in West Papua, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Serbia and Portugal;

- Member States to address historical injustices by attending and committing to demands of redistribution and reparation;

- all Member States to ratify the ILO169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention;

- the European Commission to integrate the principles of Free, Prior and Informed consent for Indigenous and other affected communities into every trade agreement negotiation with external partners.

Footnotes and references

[1] Extractivism is a model of overexploitation where local communities and environments bear the damage without benefitting, leading to ecosystem

depletion, harm to human health, and the erosion of knowledge through structural violence, particularly dispossession (Ojeda et al., 2022). It refers to labour appropriation through exploitative economic, social, and ecological relations, rooted in colonial legacies, rather than small-scale mining practices (Bruna, 2022).

[2] The core–periphery model of imperialism explains how wealth, power, and resources are concentrated in dominant "core" countries, while "peripheral" ones are kept economically dependent, exploited for raw materials and labour, and structurally blocked from equal development.

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Supporters

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