

The Accra Declaration: A Civil Society Brief to Decision Makers

Reclaiming Investment for Peoples, Lands, and Futures Adopted at the Civil Society Forum on Investment Policy

Accra, Ghana 8th of October 2025

We speak from West Africa

From a coastline scarred by slave forts, and from hinterlands where minerals leave and moral value do not. The wound of enslavement and colonial extraction still shapes our politics, our economies, and our daily lives.

We follow the Entebbe Declaration, demanding transformative frameworks for investment that work for people and the planet.

We carry it forward in Accra.

We affirm that the current investment regime is a regime of oppression. It privileges profit over people, extraction over wellbeing and livelihoods, secrecy over transparency and democracy. It narrows the space for fair and just energy transition, for national development, for gender justice, and for public services. It rewards the few, and punishes the many.

We say with moral clarity. This is about reparations and liberation.

Liberation of our territories, our bodies, and our minds.

We will not be confined by narrow, imported ideas of development. Our freedom begins with freeing our minds.

A brief record of harm

West Africa has long supplied wealth to the world.

Today the extraction continues.

Gold in Ghana. Bauxite in Guinea and diamonds and gold in Sierra Leone. Oil and gas in Nigeria. New offshore projects in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. Recent carbon markets driving a proliferation of land-based projects across the continent. Gas prospects and threatened fisheries in The Gambia. Oil, gas, timber and bauxite in Cameroon.

Minerals for the energy transition leave our lands, while debt, pollution, hunger and degraded ecosystems remain. Investor–State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) turns our laws into targets and our budgets into collateral. Law firms and hedge funds package ISDS claims as

assets, then profit when we defend the public interest. Communities resist, yet are rarely heard.

Facts that show a pattern:

- Extractive exports dominate foreign earnings in several countries, while value addition at home remains limited.
- ISDS cases against African states have multiplied, draining scarce public funds and reducing policy space for progressive action.
- Arbitration costs rise, eating into health, education, water, agriculture, infrastructure, and climate budgets.
- States elsewhere are exiting fossil-protecting treaties. Africa must not be trapped in regimes when others are leaving.
- Environmental pollution and land degradation from these extractives has made our communities uninhabitable

This is not development. It is the financial afterlife of the empire.

We declare: Enough!

Enough of investor–state dispute settlement.

Enough of treaties that gag our national laws, parliaments and sideline our courts.

Enough of secret deals, signed without the people, that bind our futures.

Terminate all IIAs that privilege investor profits over public welfare, particularly those with ISDS clauses

We refuse new texts that smuggle ISDS back through side doors.

We call for inclusive open processes, public drafts, and full scrutiny by parliaments, the press, and communities.

We call for the immediate dismantling of the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment at the World Bank

We call for reparations for harms done.

For the consequences of climate change on our territories caused by the industrialisation of the North.

For poisoned waters, stolen lands, unpaid wages, and wages that do not meet a living standard, and the rights denied in the name of investment.

Reparation and liberation are is not charity. It is justice.

We declare: another way is possible

We believe in responsible investment rooted in justice.

In solidarity, not subjugation.

In economies that nourish the earth, and care for people.

1) Energy transition and a responsible fossil exit

The exit from fossil fuels must be responsible. Companies must mitigate, prevent, and compensate for risks to people and the environment, and states have obligations to hold those companies to account.

Divestment and decommissioning must be transparent, with clear timelines, clean-up, and funds for workers and affected communities.

Current treaties and ISDS give companies powerful leverage in negotiations over exit, and to extract compensation, delay closure, or weaken domestic accountability mechanisms. They must go.

Regulators need policy space to protect people and nature as conditions change.

2) Industrial policy, manufacturing, and our local economies

No country has developed without industrial policy. Thus, countries should develop their industrial policies.

Agreements must shift us from raw exports to value addition, local content, and integrated West African value chains.

Incoming investment should complement the skills and capacities we have in our own countries, and transfer technology over time.

No tax holidays and other investment incentives without binding local content, training, and fair-work commitments.

We must plan regional value chains, build hubs, and stop illicit mineral flows.

Export taxes and other tools of industrial policy must not be blocked by treaties or tribunals.

Africa is strong in critical minerals. We will set our own conditions.

3) Gender, youth, labour, and public services

International investment agreements, including BITs, shift power away from workers, women, youth, and public services.

Women and young people carry intersecting burdens across sectors, yet are excluded from decisions and better jobs.

Investors sideline local expertise, deepen pay gaps, and repatriate profits. Public services shrink, and debt grows.

There is another path, anchored in our national priorities:

Make entry conditional: Mandatory gender- and youth-impact assessments before approval, with public disclosure.

Put people in the room: Involve women's groups, youth movements, Indigenous peoples, and unions in negotiations, oversight, and monitoring.

Align with national plans and the ILO: Bring investment rules into line with each country's national development plan, youth employment strategy, gender policy, labour code, and climate strategy, and with the ILO Decent Work Agenda and the Core Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining, elimination of forced labour, abolition of child labour, and non-discrimination.

Carve out government procurement: Exclude procurement from IIAs and trade-investment

Use procurement to build local value: Set domestic-preference rules, SME set-asides, local content and training obligations, and community-benefit clauses.

Fund public services: Earmark revenues to meet national targets for health, education, childcare, water, and care economies.

Create fair work for youth: Tie approvals to apprenticeships, paid internships, skills transfer, and decent entry-level jobs for young people.

Measure and review: Set national indicators on gender, youth, labour, and services. Review treaties and contracts against these indicators, and terminate those that undermine national goals.

4) Agriculture and land rights

Extractivism and export-driven agribusiness harm our environments, food systems and displace communities.

Fertile lands are grabbed, and livelihoods destroyed. Promised jobs do not materialize.

Women farmers are hit hardest.

We need responsible agricultural investment, diversification, fair sharing of benefits, full and adequate community consultation and participation including in the screening of investment projects.

Different rules should apply to mining and heavy industry than to food and farm goods.

Adopt sustainable investment models that promote transparent investment facilitation without ISDS, with strong safeguards for land, water, and livelihoods.

Value addition in agriculture is essential for a just transition.

We align with the AfCFTA Investment Protocol where it protects the right to regulate, labour, and the environment. We will close gaps that risk policy chill or capital flight. We will avoid overlaps that re-import ISDS by another name. We will end intra-African treaty duplication that weakens our hand.

Transition minerals must not repeat colonial patterns.

Beneficiation, technology transfer, and local content are the standard, not the exception.

We will resist any model that exports raw ones, and imports finished value.

Our 12-month programme

We act with urgency and realism.

Here is what we will deliver before October 2026.

1) Treaty Calendar and Exit Support

- By March 2026, publish an ECOWAS-wide calendar of renewals, terminations, and survival clauses.
- Table model parliamentary motions in at least five countries for termination or non-renewal.
- Provide legal support in the process of termination

2) ISDS Observatory

- By June 2026, launch a public registry of West African ISDS cases: claims, awards, sectors, third-party funders, law firms, and the public policies under attack.
- File amicus briefs, support domestic-court challenges, and publish a plain-language annual report on fiscal and social costs, with gender-responsive data.

3) Responsible Fossil Exit Toolkit

- By June 2026, issue a model Responsible Exit Act with FPIC, decommissioning plans, just-transition funds, and corporate clean-up duties.
- Map treaty and contract clauses that obstruct responsible exit, and propose replacements.

4) Industrial Policy and Local Value Pact

- By September 2026, agree on regional model clauses on local content, training obligations, technology transfer, and export-tax safeguards.
- Identify two transition-mineral chains for pilot beneficiation targets, with SME and union partners.

5) Gender, Labour, and Public Services Guarantee

- By May 2026, publish a mandatory Gender Impact Assessment template and insert it in model contracts and tenders.

6) Agriculture and Land Rights Compact

- By August 2026, propose a regional screen for land-based investments: community-led review, FPIC, water and soil safeguards, fair benefit-sharing, and grievance routes.
- Draft model rules for value addition in agriculture, and for separating heavy-industry rules from food and farm goods.

7) AfCFTA Alignment Clinics

- Run clinics for CSOs, unions, and legislators to align national law with the AfCFTA Investment Protocol's public-interest protections.
- Organize informational webinars for civil society actors in order to increase advocacy initiatives.
- Mobilize community actors and produce knowledge on bilateral investment treaties and international investment treaties in local languages to raise public awareness.
- Terminate intra-African BITs that duplicate or contradict the Protocol.

8) Speak as one region to the world

- Engage the African Union, ECOWAS, and national governments with a clear message. No treaty or finance tool may undermine climate action, gender justice, decent work, or public services.
- Coordinate with allies in Latin America and Asia to synchronise exits from IIAs with ISDS, exchange model laws, and align strategies for an alternative investment framework in line with national interests.

Our commitments

We will act with dignity, resolve, and care.

We will centre those most affected, and follow their lead.

We will build people's power, protect the civic space, and stand with public servants who choose the public good over private pressure.

We will demand transparency and hold governments accountable.

We will call things by their name, and we will name doers as well as harms.

We will measure our progress, and report it in public.

We call on governments, public lenders, and companies to choose a different path.

Invest in life, not in lawsuits.

Invest in the real economy, not in extraction without end.

Honour the right to organise, to speak, and to decide.

From the shores of the Slave Coast to the farms and towns of this region, we say: never again.

Not by chains, not by contracts, not through opacity, not by tribunals.

The wealth taken from our lands and our people must fund repair, not repeat harm.

This is our moment.

We are resolved.

We will not wait for permission to defend our future.

We will build it, together, in freedom.