



#TimeForAction  
**IS NOW**

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

**sustain**   
U.S. Youth for Justice  
and Sustainability

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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE COORDINATORS

It feels wrong to start this message off with anything but - "Whew. It's been a year."

The large-scale loss of lives and livelihoods from this pandemic showed us, again, just how unprepared our governments and public welfare systems are for disaster. It also showed us how decades of systemic injustice rooted in racism, classism, and lack of access to public welfare and universal healthcare makes historically marginalized communities even more vulnerable to a pandemic, just like with climate change.

At SustainUS, we spend a lot of time together speaking of disaster. Speaking of loss. Speaking of the fear that the climate crisis unjustly creates for both our present and future. While we weren't prepared for a pandemic, our work on the climate crisis gives us the tools of resilience, community, and hope. It also lets us know that the kind of passionate and intersectional organizing we carry out is crucial to creating a just recovery from the pandemic, for all people and the planet.

Despite the intensity of this year and the reverberating social, public health, and economic impacts brought on by the pandemic, we remained committed to reimagine our work to uplift justice and sustainability with new restrictions. For the first time in our organization's history, we have more staff members than ever before- diligently honoring our commitment to equitably compensated work for movement leaders, and looking to expand this pattern. In this season, SustainUS delegations have called out unjust local-to-global connections between polluting corporations and hollow public summits, pressured the World Bank to divest from fossil fuels in favor of climate finance that nurtures the most impacted communities globally, and sent our first-ever all Indigenous youth delegation to the United Nations to advocate for traditional ecological knowledge and decolonial solutions to the climate crisis. Read on to learn more about all of our expansive work in detail.

Throughout 2020, we (Aneesa Khan and Orion Camero) shared the role of Executive Coordinator- a powerful and dreamy combination, having organized together for years at the U.N. climate talks and sharing a deep love for using creativity as a force for systemic solutions. For both of us, the climate crisis is personal- from the typhoons of the Philippines to the heat waves of India, we carry our homelands and hearts on our sleeves while navigating our positionality to affect change as U.S. youth leaders. We are proud of the way our organization embodied resilience, hope, and passion this year.

As the season changes, as do we- and we note that the beginning of 2021 brings news that is very bittersweet! While Orion steps firmly into their role as the new Executive Coordinator, they will also be rocking this role solo starting in January. After two wonderful years as the Executive Coordinator, Aneesa will be stepping down from this position. However, she will continue to throw down with us in coalition, celebrating our beloved Aneesa through her new role exposing the fossil fuel industry with Oil Change International.

With our fiercely determined community, Orion seeks to be adaptive and imaginative as a leader in this new era of our organization- transforming the best of what we've done in the past into work that is relevant and responsive to the present. As SustainUS moves forward, the heart of the organizing we commit to is to shape the future in a way that nurtures collective liberation and climate justice for all.

Grateful to co-create that future with you,  
Orion Camero & Aneesa Khan

Handwritten signatures of Orion Camero and Aneesa Khan in black ink. Orion's signature is on the left, and Aneesa's is on the right, with a small double dot below it.

# ABOUT US

SustainUS develops lifelong leaders who are changing the world through their work at the intersection of justice and sustainability. Our community supports young leaders in developing the critical skills that are needed to affect change on the national and international stage including media outreach, organizing, fundraising, volunteer management, facilitation, and more.



# MISSION

We are a youth-led organization advancing justice and sustainability by empowering young people to engage in advocacy at the domestic and international levels.

# VISION

We are building toward a sustainable world free from systemic injustice.

# OUR WORK

We mobilize as US youth at key political moments to push political leaders, multinational institutions, and other global actors to stand on the side of justice.



**Far too often, those who have power in global institutions do not represent the interests of the people. Corrupt multinational corporations, fossil fuel billionaires, and political elites are able to buy access and power at our international institutions, setting the agenda to serve the interests of the few over the many.**

**At the same time, those most impacted by climate change, international trade agreements, and UN treaties are not at the decision-making table. As young people, we have more to lose than any other generation. This means the agenda is stacked against us and the demands of our communities and our generation are not heard. We believe that young people should have a voice in the policy decisions that will shape our future.**

# OUR PRINCIPLES

1. **We are US youth demanding a world free from systemic injustice.** We are young people born into crises we did not create. Our communities are poisoned. Our climate is destabilizing. Our futures are uncertain. We refuse to allow established leaders to sell us incremental change as the only solution to global ecological, social, and economic crises.
2. **We intervene at global spaces of power.** Wherever global decisions are made, we empower young people to shift the narrative toward justice and sustainability. Sound policymaking cements social movements' victories into law at domestic and international levels. We work with global allies who share our vision to challenge injustice at the deepest levels, pushing for long-term solutions over short-term wins.
3. **We translate the demands of the peoples' movements into action.** Social movements create demands for transformational shifts toward justice. We help put these demands to use by disrupting spaces of decision-making through media, creative direct actions, and policy advocacy rooted in our identity as young people. In doing so, we bring the public consciousness to our side, shift the political climate, and rewrite the story.
4. **We show up as United States youth honoring indigenous treaties and seeking liberation for all people.** The country that we call home has contributed most to global warming, engineered unfair trade deals, and perpetrated violence both locally and across the globe. We push the United States to take responsibility for its actions and demand that our country wield its outsized influence on the side of justice.
5. **We build power by celebrating difference.** We are individuals who are differently rooted and affiliated. We come from many creeds, homes, and histories. We are unevenly impacted by injustice. But together, we act as SustainUS. By honoring our differences, we are able to address the crises we face more fully, act with greater urgency, and show up with many at our side.
6. **We are nonviolent in word and deed.** We believe nonviolence is the only way to win the hearts and minds of the public and decision-makers. We practice nonviolence in our relationships, in our meetings, and in every public action we take.
7. **We take risks and challenge the limits of what is possible.** We address challenges and opportunities with creativity. As young people, we dream up and implement solutions to meet the scale of our crises. If we encounter something that isn't working, we take initiative and offer an alternative, honoring the wisdom of those who have come before us.
8. **We show up as our full selves in community.** We embrace all aspects of life. We have fun. We celebrate our victories. We feel grief. We nourish ourselves and form powerful connection in song, dance, and active hope. We build community together with the recognition that we are in this movement together for the long haul.
9. **We are always learning and growing together.** Leadership development is crucial to sustain social movements. We skill-up young people by connecting each other to a global community of change-agents. We engage in coaching, training, and collaborative learning to further our leadership. We learn by engaging in immersive experiences that have real impact, today and tomorrow.
10. **We build toward a world where we can all thrive.** We are the generation to transition our society from extractive to regenerative economies. We believe the pace of change is limited only by the scope of our imagination, the depth of our courage, and the strength of our communities. Together, we will win.



## COVID-19 Statement

# CARE, RESILIENCY, AND REBUILDING IN A TIME OF CORONA AND CLIMATE COLLAPSE

*Below is the SustainUS Official Statement on What COVID-19 Means for Global Justice in its entirety, written collaboratively by organizational leadership in response to the early stages of the pandemic.*

**We are not here to return to the status quo, but to transform this moment to make way for a better world.**

As a national youth-led organization with a focus on global climate issues, SustainUS has sent youth delegates to the international climate negotiations and other decision-making forums to fight for climate justice for two decades. We carry the experiences of people in the so-called U.S., the stolen land that we are settled on, and acknowledge these multifaceted identities in our work. SustainUS, like our country, is made up of people with lineages across nations, and we work to embody this knowing towards a world that sustains all of us.

Committed to global justice and solidarity, we have built lifelong relationships with youth from around the world, understanding and working beyond borders to dismantle shared injustices across our planet. Many of our members and alumni have continued to powerfully lead and show up to the climate justice movement, transformed by the experience of amplifying our voices on an international stage against corporations and corrupt governments.

During this pandemic, our organization and members remain committed to the collective care, healing, and liberation work for our communities as well as our friends in the Global South. We continue to do this work because our communities, those of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Global South communities, low-income and queer communities, have always been in crisis mode.

**We are not only trying to survive the COVID-19 pandemic, but continue centuries-long fights for liberation against colonialism and U.S. imperialism.**

We struggle against extractive economies that exploit our communities; against health, food, and water crises powered by systemic injustices; against dangerous loans from global financial institutions that are meant to keep us dependent on the status quo.

These crises, alongside the coronavirus outbreak, exacerbate already existing injustices of our current system based on predatory capitalism and supremacy culture. While these crises make visible longstanding traumas and oppressions, we are here to make visible the interconnections of our struggles and movements. In this moment, we are clear how capitalism cannot and will not ever save us, and we are here to demand the world we deserve.



Spending the last twenty years working in solidarity with youth around the world to intervene in international climate policy-making has made a few things clear to us in this moment:

**Those on the frontlines of crisis are on the forefront of change:** Indigenous, Black, Brown communities, immunocompromised and differently abled folks are more than a statistic; they/we hold crucial perspectives and solutions. Caring for the most marginalized supports the well-being of all peoples; no one is safe until everyone is safe.

**The system is not built for us, but we are made for each other.** Mutual aid networks have existed long before this pandemic, out of the necessity to address deep-rooted oppressions and disinvestment. The fact that they have proliferated in direct response to this public health and economic crisis shows the people will always choose to take care of one another, especially when governments won't.

**We continue to fiercely advocate against the United States' decades long inability to heed the global call of caution from countries it deems less worthy.** Time and time again when the Global South and countries with emerging economies call on the U.S. to take action in the interest of the international community, our governments' representatives do not show up for the collective global good, no matter the administration. Instead, they defer to corporations to continue their extraction to preserve the nation's economic advantage, to the detriment of sinking island nations and withering ecological systems. As an organization, we are committed to dismantling this story from the bottom-up.

**We reject the United States' actions to defund international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, halt immigration processes, and stop crucial supplies from getting to countries in the Global South.** Our grief is global and our solutions are not a competition between nation states. While the U.S. government attempts to divide and conquer through systemic disinvestment, pitting communities and state governments against each other, and Global North countries against Global South, we reject this scarcity mindset fueled by imperial borders. We reject xenophobia and antisemitism. Instead, we uplift empathy for humanity as a shared struggle.

**The climate crisis does not stop for a pandemic.** We remain vigilant in our fight for climate justice. Hurricanes, wildfires, droughts and other unnatural disasters will continue. Extractive pipelines, fracking wells, and unsustainable infrastructure of the old status quo are still being built on native land and next to vulnerable communities. A world beyond fossil fuels, centered on community-owned regenerative energy, is urgently possible. Still, this crisis shows us that community care and the essential workforce is what has always kept our society going. Deep relationship building in our organizing and our personal lives is one of our strongest tools to building resilient communities in the face of compounding crises. While global leaders have decided to postpone climate negotiations this year, our work for climate justice and reparations cannot wait. We will continue to keep fighting.

**The pandemic is an extreme symptom of the climate crisis.** Our collective response must also address the inequities at the root of the climate crisis, which include our health as a sacrifice zone. Just solutions to the pandemic go hand in hand with just climate solutions. Now, it is abundantly clear that the coronavirus has decimated communities across the globe, unearthing the complex and harsh circumstances of the most marginalized. The same migrant farmworkers, Indigenous communities, and low-income people without access to the internet or the privilege to stay at home are impacted first and worst by the climate crisis. Even worse, we know that the damage we continue to make on this planet will pave the way for worse pandemics to happen down the line.

**We cannot wait for another catastrophe to hit us for the world to realize that these systems have failed us all. We need just and equitable solutions now.** The global response to this crisis needs to center liberation, radical empathy, a monetary transfer from wealthy nations to poorer nations, and global cooperation against imperialistic and hegemonic practices during crises. We need to center just solutions to the climate crisis that are guided by Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Global South wisdom.

**While our organizational and usual programmatic work has been disrupted, SustainUS will be using this time as an opportunity to:**

- **Use our platform** to share and amplify our community's creative interventions and local organizing calls to action.
- **Prioritize our ability to be a force for change** through shifting our culture and structures beyond that of an organization and more as a community, embodying lessons from our work with the Wildfire Project.
- **Lean into our collective care** through social calls, expanding our mental health support resources, and supporting each other's wellness, in addition to tending our friends' across the globe.
- **Reevaluate and shift our programs** and UN engagement for the upcoming year, pivoting to domestic efforts, a move to mutual aid, and media-based advocacy.
- **Share our collective wisdom** through reviving the Training Collective to revamp and skill up young movement leaders.
- **Build a better world** through global solidarity and decolonial foreign policy. We will continue to work towards a Global Green New Deal and organize to kick Big Polluters out of decision-making spaces and stimulus packages.

**The world we know is already dying, and we must create a new one.**

Where we see a disaster, corporations and governments see opportunity. In the wreckage, the world we know is already dying, and we must create a new one. We are mourning, and we are fighting. We are angry, and we are hopeful through taking action. We carry our empathy and compassion for each other just as we carry our rage at the leaders and systems who have repeatedly failed us. Together in critical care and community defense, we will succeed and thrive.

Forever towards a future worth fighting for,

**The SustainUS Community**

# USNG NEW YORK DELEGATION

## Background

In September 2019, New York City became the epicenter of the international climate conversation. The climate crisis has long been here. Seven years ago, Hurricane Sandy flooded the city, killing 41, destroying 650,000 homes and leaving 7.5 million people without power. This devastation still has ramifications for the 8.6 million New Yorkers today, but the climate crisis is bigger than just extreme weather events. Communities of color in NYC and around the world disproportionately bear its everyday impacts. But this city, known for its resilient diasporic communities, is not giving up. While communities are organizing on the ground to pass ambitious local climate action, we aimed to amplify local grassroots movements, fights, and successes to a global scale at the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG)'s Climate Summit on September 23, 2019, held at the UN Headquarters in New York City.

As the climate crisis becomes more all-encompassing by the day, the world requires ambition and immediate follow-through. At the UNSG Climate Summit, countries like Germany, Bolivia, and even the US, were supposed to reveal “ambitious” climate action. The Summit aimed to encourage world leaders and their UN delegates to amp up their climate commitments prior to the 25th UN Climate Talks (COP25) in Chile. However, the fact that the polluters most responsible for causing the climate crisis still have a seat at the table in the UN climate negotiation process has remained undiscussed. For far too long, agreements have been watered down by the fossil fuel industry, the polluting elite, and regressive Global North delegates. From the revelation that Shell wrote a whole article of the Paris Agreement to the continued lack of mention of fossil fuels in international climate policy, it is clear that to achieve true climate ambition, it is necessary to kick big polluters out of UN climate policymaking through a conflict of interest policy.

Without real legal ramifications and accountable commitments, we saw that the UNSG Climate Summit served as little more than a press conference. We are tired of the fossil fuel industry and the United Nations offering empty and/or inadequate responses to the global climate crisis. Accountability for our future needs to begin now. Accountability for our future begins with seating those most impacted by the climate crisis at the decision-making table, not those who caused it in the first place.





## Delegation

SustainUS launched the NYC Delegation to the UNSG Climate Summit, made up of 10 local youth representatives (ages 18-29) from NYC's frontline communities and environmental organizations. This delegation aggregated not only different experiences of the climate crisis but also diverse organizational backgrounds and clout in the work to advance climate justice.

Our delegation consisted primarily of POC youth aiming to create space for frontline communities to train and organize one another. Around the UNSG Climate Summit, the delegation organized on the inside while coordinating in coalition with other movement groups taking action on the outside — all to hold the Summit and the United States accountable to the voices of global young people and frontline communities, not the fossil fuel industry.

### Our goals and strategy

Our goals as a group were centered around three central objectives:

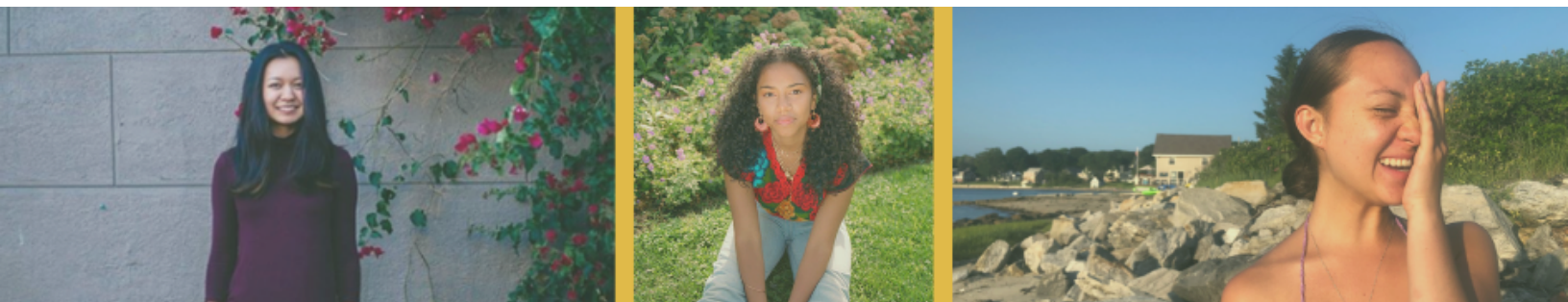
- Elevate New York and Global frontline voices while exposing the voice that the fossil fuel industry has at the United Nations through the “Kick Big Polluters Out” campaign.
- Strengthen connections between NYC-based and international climate organizing.
- Show the oil and gas industry that we the people are a threat to their hegemony.

In the context of our first and second goals, SustainUS members attended meetings of NYC-based organizing groups both in-person and virtually to offer our global perspective and emphasis on kicking big polluters out and centering frontline leadership in a just transition. We found that the disparity in the messaging of these groups suggests that our presence in meetings was impactful, but there is still work to be done in the broader conversation in the US-based youth climate movement.

During the UN Youth Climate Summit, SustainUS delegates both organized amongst other youth attendees and publicly interrupted proceedings. These actions served all three of our goals. We connected with youth from four continents, sharing stories and our plans to sing a song in the final panel of the day. The song called on the UNFCCC to kick polluters out of climate negotiations and meaningfully engage frontline youth in policy processes. During the day, two SustainUS members birddogged both the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, and Microsoft's Chief Environmental Officer, Lukas Joppa. In both of these instances, we were able to call out the wrongful influence of the fossil fuel industry.

On the ground, the press conference SustainUS co-organized with Corporate Accountability and Demand Climate Justice outside of the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative reception on September 22nd both elevated frontline voices and drew clear lines between NYC-based organizing and events and global struggles for justice. Frontline spokespeople from ActionAid, Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development, Friends of the Earth Uganda, and Friends of the Earth Nigeria shared testimony on fossil fuel corporations' historic and future responsibility for the climate crisis. The press conference garnered substantial news coverage from a variety of outlets, sharing these stories in long- and short-form around the world.

Our pursuit of the final goal—to threaten oil and gas industry dominance—was embedded in all of our work. Inside of the Gramercy Park Hotel, just before the press conference began outside, SustainUS members attempted to infiltrate the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative reception. We were met with heavy security; industry professionals recognized us—nonviolent young New Yorkers—as a threat to their greenwashing and interference with meaningful climate policy.



## SustainUS NYC Delegation to the UNSG Climate Summit



## MEDIA HITS

The NYC Delegation to the Youth Climate Summit (YCS) received media attention during and after the YCS, across a broad spread of platforms and with a variety of foci. The Delegation's actions during the YCS went viral on Twitter, and our interference with the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI) events received both long- and short-form coverage. Additionally, members of the Delegation were **profiled in Vice** and a **two-part** feature by Milk. The variety of this coverage suggests that our actions cut across a range of audiences, drawing in readers and viewers from diverse backgrounds and interests. Furthermore, the Delegation's work directed media attention to our partners—global frontline organizations and their representatives—thus leveraging our privilege as a Global North-based group to uplift the voices that must be heard most urgently.

Just after our actions around the UN Climate Summit concluded, we produced a **short video** that was viewed on Twitter 1400 times. Overall, the Delegation's work received media coverage that accurately reflected our actions in alignment with our chosen points of emphasis and general framing of the issues at hand. We celebrate the presence of our work in the world, and acknowledge that the fight to shift media narratives around the climate crisis is one deserving of continued attention and resources.

Follow [this link](#) to a table of articles.

# WORLD BANK DELEGATION

## Background

Since 2017, SustainUS has been supporting a delegation of young people from the U.S. to advocate for global climate justice at the World Bank Annual Meetings. The World Bank Group (WBG) is made up of five international finance organizations that leverage over \$60 billion in loans and development aid annually. The stated mission of the WBG is to “end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity in a sustainable way.” Despite their public recognition of climate change as a serious threat to development, the World Bank’s current portfolio includes lucrative fossil fuel projects and limited finance for those living in energy poverty, for whom finance is most difficult to access. In partnership with the Big Shift Global campaign, SustainUS has advocated for the World Bank to fully divest from fossil fuel finance and meet the demands for increased climate finance, energy justice, and ownership from the Global South.

The United States has the most voting power within the World Bank, and U.S. youth have the right and responsibility to hold the World Bank - particularly leadership from the Global North - accountable to the future it finances – our future. Youth in the U.S., and specifically in the Washington D.C. metro area, have physical access and potential political leverage that youth in World Bank “recipient countries” do not have. We launched the SustainUS World Bank delegation with a vision of global justice and an awareness that the current structure of the World Bank perpetuates power structures that benefit the Global North over the Global South. We aimed to create a delegation of U.S. youth that are accountable to and follow the leadership of frontline communities in the Global South who are directly harmed by the Bank’s continued fossil fuel divestment.





## Delegation

Last year, we supported a delegation of 10 young people (ages 18-28) from Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia to attend the Annual Meetings from October 13th – 19th in Washington, D.C. to advocate for climate justice and stand in solidarity with frontline communities in World Bank client countries. Our group has deep familial and personal connections to the countries that the World Bank operates in. Together we make up a group that represents India, Guatemala, Peru, Honduras, South Korea, and the United States. The delegation met on a weekly basis over the course of seven weeks leading up to the Annual Meetings to prepare and strategically plan how to engage during the week. A major component of our work was our partnership with other organizations in The Big Shift Global coalition. We coordinated with the coalition on weekly Zoom video conference calls to prepare for a direct action taking place on the last day of the Annual Meetings.

## Our goals and strategy

The delegation’s goal for the week was to work with our partners at the Big Shift Global coalition to call for policies in line with the 1.5°C goal, including explicit, measurable commitments to stop the financing of all fossil fuels and fossil fuel related industries and scaling up investments in distributed renewable energy. We aimed to do this by asking questions directly to officials during panels and town halls, through a side event, art activism, and a direct letter delivery and day of protest. You can find a [\*\*video compilation here\*\*](#) of our bird dogging advocacy at the meetings.

Beyond these interventions, we spent much of our week preparing for the direct action that took place on the last day of the meetings. On Friday, October 18, 2019, activists from around the world converged to call for the World Bank President and Directors to take stronger action on climate change in Washington, D.C. That morning, the SustainUS delegation took the role of hand-delivering a collaboratively drafted letter, with sign-ons of more than 110 organizations, to World Bank President Malpass and Directors. More than 75 folks mobilized in Murrow Park to hear frontline advocates from the Global South speak before marching around the International Finance Corporation and back to the park. Along the route, protesters stopped in front of the World Bank Group press office, where reporters came out to capture photos and quotes. As the march continued, about 20 more protesters joined from another climate event happening that morning in D.C. SustainUS took on lead roles in making the mobilization possible, including weeks of pre-protest organizing, MCing the event, recruiting protesters, making art, and leading the physical march.

The action represented the largest action to take place at the World Bank Annual Meetings in years, and was considered a success by co-coordinators from the Big Shift Global and USCAN. After the meetings, an overnight retreat was held in the Shenandoah Valley to reflect, process, and hold space and conversations for delegation members to speak openly and confidently about their experiences at the meetings and on the delegation.





## Goals and Strategy (Continued)

We closed out the 2019 program in agreement that SustainUS plays a unique and critical role in advocating at the World Bank meetings, but that our focus going forward should be on creating more civil space, especially for youth from the Global South, rather than focusing on advocating as U.S. youth with the limited civil space that does exist. In the time since this action, U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley has introduced a pair of bills prohibiting financial companies from making new investments in fossil fuels, and “ensuring that the United States uses its voice and vote in international financial institutions to divest from fossil fuel investments.” Notably, the UN Secretary General has also joined the call, asking that all development banks act to end fossil fuel investments.

We started 2020 with the intention to launch and support a delegation to attend this fall's Annual Meetings, but our in-person advocacy and delegation development work has been put on pause with COVID-19. We have stayed connected with the Big Shift Global coalition this year and boost calls to action to our networks. Delegation alumni came together online to participate in a virtual day of action in October, which proved to be a grassroots and decentralized effort with organizations in the Global South having equal ability to engage. We look forward to building on these principles during our work in 2021 and beyond.

## Media Hits

- Devex Reporter Kate Midden tweeted one of the actions done by the delegation, receiving recognition from the head of Oxfam DC in the replies:  
[\*\*https://twitter.com/katemidden/status/1185265436566441990\*\*](https://twitter.com/katemidden/status/1185265436566441990)
- Coverage of the protest happened primarily on Twitter with the hashtag [#FossilFreeWBG](#). One video of the protest received over 3.2k views:  
[\*\*https://twitter.com/collinrees/status/1185248192985743360\*\*](https://twitter.com/collinrees/status/1185248192985743360)
- This Devex article [“Is the World Bank Aligned with the Paris Agreement? They’re Not Sure Yet.”](#) was a response to the question posed by SustainUS to World Bank President David Malpass where he responded “I don’t know, I’m not a scientist” to a direct question on alignment with 1.5. SustainUS was not credited. Our response:  
[\*\*https://twitter.com/SustainUS/status/1184907384420012032\*\*](https://twitter.com/SustainUS/status/1184907384420012032)
- The action was picked up and amplified by local supporters and partner organizations through the Big Shift Coalition:
  - **Shutdown DC:**  
[\*\*https://twitter.com/ShutDown\\_DC/status/1185253670063169536\*\*](https://twitter.com/ShutDown_DC/status/1185253670063169536)
  - **Action Aid:** [\*\*https://twitter.com/ActionAid/status/1185114326568505344\*\*](https://twitter.com/ActionAid/status/1185114326568505344)
  - **Center for International Environmental Law:**  
[\*\*https://twitter.com/ciel\\_tweets/status/1185252010075009024\*\*](https://twitter.com/ciel_tweets/status/1185252010075009024)

# #TimeForAction

## COP25 INDIGENOUS DELEGATION

### Background

While SustainUS has been known to bring U.S. youth to the global climate negotiations, or Conference of Parties (COP), year after year, we sought to set a new precedent by empowering a different form of delegation for our mainstay program in 2019.

Holding the reality that Indigenous peoples are on the frontline of climate catastrophe and at the forefront of solutions rooted in traditional ecological knowledge, steward 80% of our globe's biodiversity, and are traditionally left out of negotiations due to the U.N. not recognizing nations' sovereignty with negotiating power or voting rights, SustainUS brought together the organization's first ever Indigenous delegation for any of our programs.

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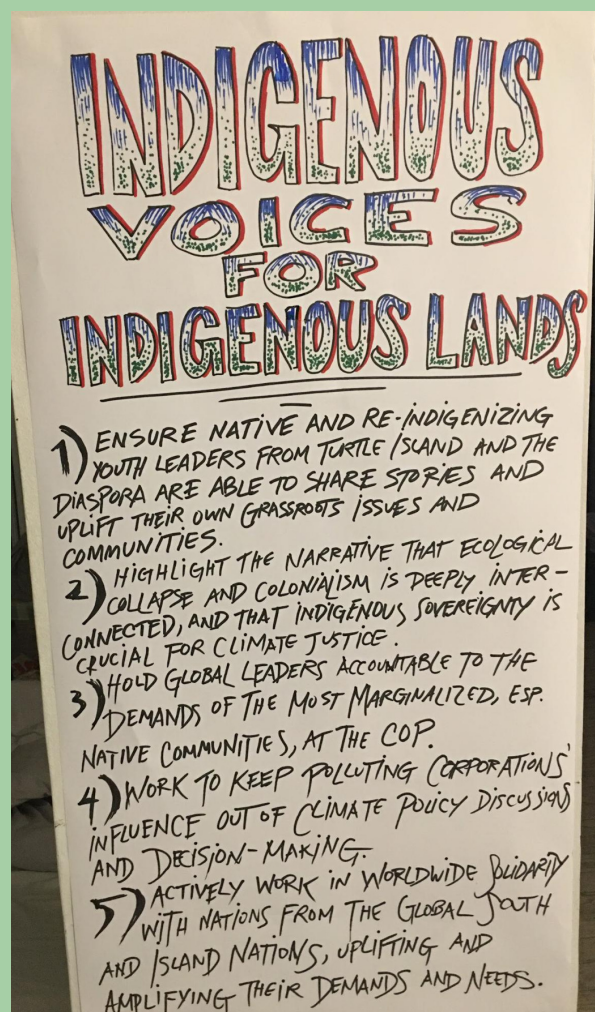
Holding the reality that Indigenous peoples are on the frontline of climate catastrophe and at the forefront of solutions rooted in traditional ecological knowledge, steward 80% of our globe's biodiversity, and are traditionally left out of negotiations due to the U.N. not recognizing nations' sovereignty with negotiating power or voting rights, SustainUS brought together the organization's first ever Indigenous delegation for any of our programs.



## Goals and Strategy

As the first-ever all Indigenous (and colonially diasporic) delegation to the U.N. climate negotiations, we came to the negotiations with five core goals:

- Ensure native and re-indigenizing youth leaders from Turtle Island and the diaspora are able to share stories and uplift their own grassroots issues and communities.
- Highlight the narrative that ecological collapse and colonialism are deeply interconnected, and that Indigenous sovereignty is crucial for climate justice.
- Hold global leaders accountable to the demands of the most marginalized, especially native communities, at the COP (Conference of Parties).
- Work to keep polluting corporations' influence out of climate policy discussions and decision-making.
- Actively work in worldwide solidarity with nations from the Global South and island nations, uplifting and amplifying their demands and needs.



We began our week with the critical need to honor organizers on-the-ground facing human rights abuses in Chile, which caused the move from Santiago to Madrid. In partnership with others, we held an action shaming Chile's president, Piñera, for the extreme police brutality in solidarity. Our delegation worked mainly in three arenas- media, mobilizations, and policy. These involved meetings to coalition-build with partners, planning actions, and creating compelling visuals and songs to uplift our grassroots demands in unique ways. Others worked on pitching pieces to journalists, producing original content, and being spokespeople for news coverage of our ongoing work. A committed crew of people also diligently attended the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus daily meetings, keeping track of the policy conversations to translate these contexts into our organizing.



## Goals and Strategy (Continued)

One of our most media-visible accomplishments was collaborating with notable youth climate activist, Greta Thunberg, in her first public appearance. Working together, we hosted a press conference to redirect her social capital and celebrity status to highlight underrepresented young voices in the climate justice movement. The Indigenous delegation opened the event with a song and had our youngest delegate, Rose Whipple, speak on a panel with frontline youth leaders from Russia, the Philippines, the Marshall Islands, and Uganda. This collaboration was featured in a variety of outlets, including **Democracy Now!**, **Voice of America**, **Reuters**, and more. According to data analysis from one of our Indigenous delegates, Leilani Ganser, who works at the Pulitzer Center, our reach spanned 3 million views across varying outlets with the story covered in 7 languages. The underlying intention we broke into the news cycle was to disrupt a celebrity-centered culture, working with Greta to instead center a mosaic of voices who experience the climate crisis to be uplifted and heard.

Alongside the global Indigenous bloc, our **delegates also stormed the stage of the Fridays for Future rally** in front of the 500,000-person march in Madrid. This symbolic gesture of Native elders and youth united from around the world, coming onto the stage in Spain, culminated in a powerful global prayer and song- uplifting the resilience of Indigenous wisdom and determination despite hundreds of years of colonization and conquest. These are the same forces at play in the climate crisis, and we are grateful to have played a role in that historic moment and **to have our voices heard**.

Overall, our delegation covered a lot of ground in many ways, with more examples of our work than shared here. In the policy sphere, we fiercely **advocated against Article 6**, because it took out “human rights” language out of negotiation texts and created corporate loopholes in the form of carbon markets. We called out corporate polluters, connecting the **Spanish company Endesa’s sponsorship of COP25**. Many of our delegates uplifted the MMIW (Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women) movement, holding healing circles for women all over the world to mourn environmental defenders and process the climate crisis together. Our diasporic Indigenous delegates built bridges within the island nation community, reflecting on the **loss of our connections** to our culture due to migration and colonization. To bring collective resilience to Overall, our delegation covered a lot of ground in many ways, with more examples of our work than shared here. In the policy sphere, we fiercely advocated against Article 6, because it took out “human rights” language out of negotiation texts and created corporate loopholes in the form of carbon markets. We called out corporate polluters, connecting the Spanish company Endesa’s sponsorship of COP25. Many of our delegates uplifted the MMIW (Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women) movement, holding healing circles for women all over the world to mourn environmental defenders and process the climate crisis together. Our diasporic Indigenous delegates built bridges within the island nation community, reflecting on the loss of our connections to our culture due to migration and colonization. To bring collective resilience to our fellow Indigenous youth from around the world, SustainUS held a community dinner for us to heal from the colonial intensity of the negotiations space- holding cross-cultural ceremony to remember why we came to do this work and to honor our ancestors.

Ending our time at COP25 was an intense experience, but we held down a lot of critical work to build off of. As part of a huge coalition-built unsanctioned action where frontline Indigenous and Black voices were centered, SustainUS delegates advocated against a closing keynote that favored voices of corporations and the elites over directly impacted grassroots communities. Our demands and work were silenced by U.N. security, **resulting in the unprecedented expulsion of over 200+ observers**. Two of our delegation leaders led the closing action of the negotiations, uniting thousands of people and hundreds of grassroots groups to kick big polluters out of climate policy decisions.



Overall, our Indigenous delegation has set an important precedent for identity-based programs within our organization broadly, seeing that the collective impact of our work nurtured specific needs and demands in the global community. In addition, the perspective of our group prioritized a prayerful groundedness by bringing spirit and heart to the climate talks in an otherwise cold, bureaucratic and sterile space.

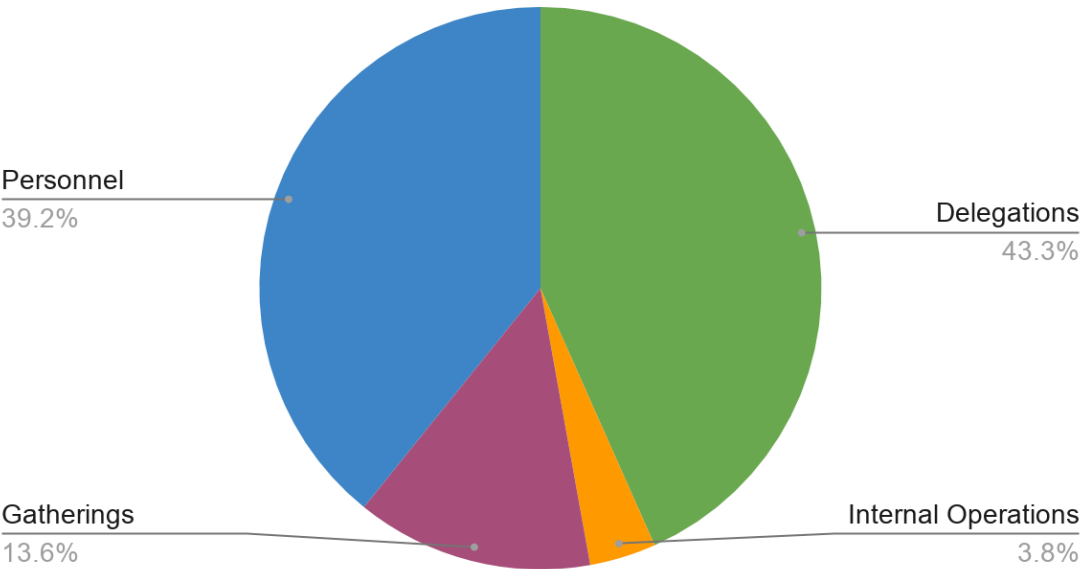
## INDIGENOUS VOICES FOR INDIGENOUS LANDS



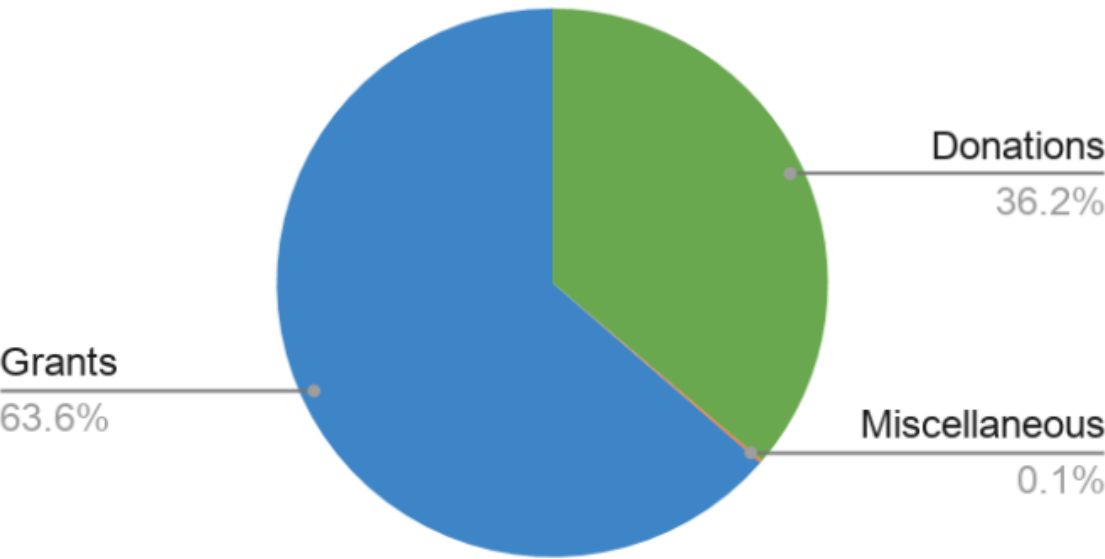
*fiscal year 2020*

# FINANCES

## Expenses



## Revenue



*fiscal year 2020*

## FINANCES

### Income

Grants	<b>\$132,750</b>
Donations	<b>\$75,625</b>
Miscellaneous	<b>\$305</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$208,680</b>
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### Expenses

Staff & Contractors	<b>\$56,591</b>
Delegations:	
• COP25	<b>\$53,364</b>
• World Bank	<b>\$4,911</b>
• NYC Climate Summit	<b>\$4,295</b>
Gatherings & Trainings	<b>\$19,697</b>
Operations & Services	<b>\$5,517</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$144,374</b>

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Grateful for all of our inspiring donors and funders, who have made the work of this year possible. All of us at SustainUS thank the many people listed here and beyond that have given their resources, time, and support in all sorts of ways (such as contributing monthly, giving a major donation, partnering with us or providing a grant for our programs).

Adam Bourjaily	Dylan Kitts	Michael Berger
Adam Hasz	Elena Bird	Mylene Curtis
Alejandro Marquez	Elizabeth Ingriselli	NRDC
Alison Sever	Ellie Johnston	Nicholas Ladd
Amanda Fassett	Emily Head	North Light Fund
Anchun Jean SU	Erin Remillard	Northstar Fund
Ann Sonnen	Ethan Case	Paige Kirstein
Aravinda Ananda	Ethan Hirsch-Tauber	Pamela Howard
Ari Rubenstein	Garrett Blad	Paul Worley
Aryeh Shell	Gary Oakley	Paula Bandt
Austin Curtis	Grayson Shell	Rachel Chodorow-Reich
Barbara Blad	Havely Carsky	Rachel Robbins
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Bryna Dofrin-Shaw	Jeremy Blanchard	RSF Social Finance
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Daniel Jubelirer	Krsna Powell	Tamara Cohen
Daniel Kaplan	Laura Fernandez	U.S. Climate Action Network
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David Fairley	Marc Goloff	Wilderness Society
David Nyquist	Margaret Babbott	Women's Donor Network
Deb Wilson	Mary Katharine O'Brien	Yuri Han
Drew Zader	Meredith Hackleman	

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**WITH OUR DEEPEST  
GRATITUDE, THANK YOU.**

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# ON THE HORIZON

As we embark into a new era and into the future of SustainUS, this moment asks us to combine both a contemporary response to the climate crisis and community needs with a desire to draw upon the collective wisdom of our delegates and our two decades' worth of impact. Our organization carries a unique role in the youth climate justice movement as a connector between local, national, and global spaces- oftentimes, many of our delegations embody local and frontline efforts from individual members, coming together to represent a cross-cultural youth voice for the nation in these internationally minded negotiations and decision-making spaces. Taking this into account, our core priorities for this upcoming year are to:

- continue our inspiring work in creating opportunities for young people to engage meaningfully in critical advocacy and build resilient and supportive community,
- nurture globally minded action and perspective in organizing work on-the-ground in the United States, and
- build spaces for experiences and lessons of our delegations to tend the growing youth climate justice movement at-large.

All things considered, instilling a globally conscious perspective that actively tends the wounds of our nation's painful past feels clear as our work to do. Together, we live into a story of a powerful cross-cultural alliance of integrity where Indigenous sovereignty, racial equity, and climate justice are front and center.

Pending the shifting circumstances of global travel and COVID-19, we are actively planning to send a COP26 delegation to Glasgow to continue bringing local youth voices to the U.N. In addition, we are shaping out a number of emerging programs in 2021 that honor the priorities above.

