**PRESS RELEASE**

**Indigenous leaders call on South Korea to stop financing carbon bomb near Tiwi Islands**

**Despite pouring millions of dollars into the Barossa gas project, South Korean financiers decline to meet with Indigenous stakeholders**

**February 28, 2024 (SEOUL)** – Tiwi Islanders, who are on the frontline against SK E&S's Barossa gas project in the Timor Sea, visited South Korea and held a press conference with National Assembly Rep. Hye-young Jang, Solutions for Our Climate (SFOC), and Youth Climate Emergency Action (YCEA) at the National Assembly on the morning of the 27th.

The Tiwi Islanders emphasized the cultural and spiritual values of the sea that is under threat from the Barossa gas project. They called on the South Korean government, public financial institutions, and companies involved in the project to withdraw their support.

The visit follows the Tiwi Islanders’ trip to Japan, where they met with the Japanese Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Finance, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the mega banks involved in the Barossa gas project. Meanwhile, key South Korean stakeholders, such as governmental agencies and public financial institutions, have declined to meet.

**Pirrawayingi Puruntatameri, a Munupi elder and a recent Mayor of the Tiwi Islands, said:**

“For thousands of years, we have retained and maintained our spiritual connection to the sea, as did our ancestors. We have come here to respect the country of Korea, its people, and the environment. We would like the Korean government to respect our traditional knowledge and connection. It is imperative that the Korean government also respects our people, our culture, and our country. Especially our seas that will be affected by the Barossa gas project. And we would be grateful to have the Korean government support the Tiwi people by not investing in the Barossa gas project.”

**Therese Bourke, the leader of the Malawu clan of the Tiwi Islands, said:**

“We wrote to the Korean Export-Import Bank (KEXIM), and they wouldn’t communicate with us after we lodged a human rights complaint using their own grievance mechanism. We had to come all this way to share our story. Our home and way of life are facing a threat that is impacting our mental, emotional and social wellbeing. [...] I am here today to ask the government and the National Assembly to think about us when you are making decisions about where to get your energy from.”

“Imagine if Tiwi people came to Korea and started drilling the sacred spiritual Mount Baekdu for gas and laid a pipeline right through the Gyeongbokgung Palace. That’s exactly what it feels like for us […] We also believe in the spirits of our environment the same way that you do. KEXIM has committed to the United Nations Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights. We ask you to ensure that KEXIM is complying with Free Prior & Informed Consent (FPIC), which is included in their human rights policy.”

**National Assembly Representative Hye-young Jang said:**

“South Korea shares the same planet with the Tiwi people, shares the pain of colonization, and has a responsibility as a climate villain to tackle the climate crisis. Yet, KEXIM and K-SURE insist on financing the Barossa gas project, which is fraught with problems. I stand here to appeal to you, the people of South Korea, in order to stop this senseless act.”

“The gas imported from the Barossa gas field will also be utilized for gas-based blue hydrogen generation in South Korea. This risks locking our nascent hydrogen economy into fossil fuels, which would act as a major obstacle to South Korea's response to the climate crisis.”

“The economic case is equally concerning. According to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) World Energy Outlook, in a 2050 carbon neutrality scenario, South Korea's mid- to long-term gas demand will sharply decline, and gas imports from Australia will reach zero. As a result, the Barossa gas project will likely become stranded over time. Not to mention the project is becoming increasingly costly as Australian climate regulations strengthen, such as the Safeguard Mechanism.”

**Eunbin Kang, Executive Director of YCEA and a co-plaintiff of the injunction filed against KEXIM and K-SURE in 2022, said:**“The South government and companies still think that they can exploit the oceans, lands, and forests around the world as resources to be consumed as long as they negotiate at the state level. The South Korean government is so eager to pour millions of dollars into a project that threatens Indigenous peoples' lands that are beyond its own borders.”

“I want to live in a country that does not export danger and death to our neighbors. I want to live in a country that stands up for the planet's ecosystems, and for the exploited and oppressed. I urge the South Korean financial institutions to stop financing the Barossa gas project.”

**To access the recording of the press conference, check this** [**link**](https://forourclimate.sharepoint.com/%3Af%3A/s/share/Eulx5NiFb9tMuAMDJpVVAdAB3-U5mEnLttTJfZfIFLvYKA?e=7vtnva)**.**

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*Solutions for Our Climate (SFOC) is an independent non-profit organization that works to accelerate global greenhouse gas emissions reduction and energy transition. SFOC leverages research, litigation, community organizing, and strategic communications to deliver practical climate solutions and build movements for change.*

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