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COP 26 and the Just Transition

Remembering the 6th Anniversary of the Samarco tailings dam collapse

Today at COP 26, many social aspects of climate change are being explored – climate justice, impact on culture, inclusion, and Indigenous calls for climate action. To this end, LAPFF would like to acknowledge the anniversary of the Samarco tailings dam collapse in Mariana, Brazil, which killed 19 people and continues to leave many thousands without homes or access to much needed resources six years after the disaster. The Samarco project is a joint venture between mining companies BHP and Vale.

Mining companies have stated repeatedly that the minerals they mine – copper, lithium, and others – are critical for a successful green transition. However, the social impacts of these companies on workers and communities are often blatantly ignored. As a result, tragedies such as the Samarco tailings dam collapse and, a mere three years later in January 2019, the Brumadinho tailings dam collapse nearby in Brazil have been all too common.

LAPFF has been clear that the only way a successful transition to a net zero emissions economy can take place is through a just transition. This is a transition that incorporates the input and needs of workers and communities – including Indigenous communities – and respects their cultures.

LAPFF Chair Cllr Doug McMurdo stated: “It is vital that we do a better job of including the needs of workers and views of communities into our climate transition. This approach is not purely altruistic. There is a real likelihood that if we do not take appropriate steps to prevent incidents such as Samarco and Brumadinho in future, the climate transition will fail. No one can afford for that to happen.”

On that note, my heart goes out to the victims of the Samarco tragedy today, most of whom are still struggling to achieve appropriate compensation and reparations – including permanent housing – six years on from the event. This state of affairs is utterly unacceptable and must never be repeated.”

Brazilian investor, JGP Asset Management, adds: “Mining is a crucial activity for the energy transition, but we can no longer negatively impact the environment by affecting its biodiversity and local communities through these



operations, just in order to maximize profit. Particularly in Brazil, a poor, unequal country that houses most of the Amazon region and 7103 indigenous locations, these companies need to gain a socio-environmental license to operate, not only preventing significant harm, but repairing the past and protecting the future.”

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About the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum: The Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF) is a voluntary association of 84 public sector pension funds and seven pool companies based in the UK with combined assets of over £300 billion. It exists to ‘promote the long-term investment interests of local authority pension funds, and to maximise their influence as shareholders to promote corporate responsibility and high standards of corporate governance amongst the companies in which they invest.’ PIRC is the Research and Engagement partner to the Forum @lapfforum <https://lapfforum.org/>.