

Views on different elements of the Work Programme on Just Transition Pathways

Submission by Brazil on behalf of ABU

(September 2023)

Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (ABU) welcome the opportunity to present their views on different elements of the Work Programme on Just Transition Pathways, established in paragraphs 50-53 of Decision 1/CMA.4, as per the invitation made in the Draft Conclusions Proposed by the Chairs of the SBSTA and SBI on the discussions held during the SB58 (Bonn, June 2023).

Context

As the international community increasingly experiences the existential threat posed by climate change, the transition to low-emissions and resilient economies seems inevitable. As this process unfolds, however, there is no guarantee that the result will be a fairer and more equitable world and societies. But there is no reason for this to be so.

In this critical decade for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, it is imperative for us to move forward with the conversations on the necessary pathways to achieve these Just Transitions, guided as always by the principles of the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, based on equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of the different national circumstances.

As well as being a threat to life on our planet, climate change exacerbates inequality and poverty worldwide, with the poorest and more vulnerable communities and developing countries suffering disproportionately more its impacts . In this sense, fighting climate change should be regarded as a means to fight inequality and advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

When considering the differing starting points and development priorities, along with achieving sustainable development while eradicating poverty and guaranteeing food security, it is necessary to remind ourselves that there is no “one size fits all” solution. It is also necessary to make clear that when we discuss just transitions, what we are discussing is the development of feasible pathways

for sustainable development that leave no one behind. We must ensure that the transition to a low-emissions and resilient economy will not widen the existing gaps between countries or, even worse, hamper the sustainable development right of the Global South. In this sense, economic development is essential for adopting measures to address climate change.

Tackling climate change opens up the opportunity to redefine national development priorities and strategies, with the potential to induce structural transformations in the economy, societies and our relationship with the environment. In doing so, it creates the opportunity to change the world for the better.

In this way, we understand that we need to continue exploring pathways that will lead us to a sustainable development that is inclusive, and strengthens our societies, respecting and protecting human rights including labor rights, while fulfilling our climate commitments. To reach this objective, we will need to develop solutions and policies aimed at solving the climate crisis whilst promoting justice, ending poverty and eradicating hunger, as well as at reducing inequalities, within and among countries.

Promoting sustainable development is, undoubtedly, the most efficient way to address the climate crisis. Thus, reducing inequality within and among countries, as required by SDG 10, must be part of any consistent approach to the challenge of climate change. Moreover, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, and the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement are intrinsically interdependent; one cannot be achieved without the other¹.

ABU sees the debate on just transition as a natural consequence of the existing nexus between climate change and sustainable development: for development to be sustainable, the transition must be just; and for the transition to be just, it must bring about a reduction in inequalities.

No country should be forced to choose between promoting climate action, on the one hand; and advancing welfare, reducing inequalities, and eliminating poverty, on the other. It is thus imperative to define criteria multilaterally and to open up policy space, both nationally and internationally, so that countries can advance their climate ambition without jeopardizing the ability to promote a

¹ These linkages have been extensively shown by the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nation's recently published report "Synergy Solutions for a World in Crisis: Tackling Climate and SDG Action Together", among others.

more equitable society and to address the structural inequalities of the global economy, in accordance with their respective national priorities and circumstances.

It is of the utmost importance to abide by Article 3.5 of the UNFCCC that states: “The Parties should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all Parties, particularly developing country Parties, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change. Measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.”

Moreover, measures adopted on environmental grounds by developed countries – such as subsidies, standards and other types like levies – may hinder economic and social development and poverty eradication in developing countries and, therefore, affect the workforce in those countries, jeopardizing the full realization of the sustainable development, including its environmental pillar.

ABU considers the Work Programme on Just Transition Pathways as a privileged platform for achieving the abovementioned goals.

Objectives

The Work Programme on Just Transition Pathways should aim to minimizing the disruptive consequences of the rapid systemic transformations that will be produced by the transition to a low-emissions and resilient economy, with the promotion of social justice and the achievement of a more symmetrical international economic order at its core.

Scope

The discussion on just transitions – in the plural, as different countries will take varying pathways according to their national circumstances and priorities – should not be restricted to the workforce, although ABU does not deny the importance of the dimensions of job creation, the skilling, upskilling or reskilling of workers, and the promotion of decent jobs under this topic.

Institutional arrangements

At the current stage of negotiations, ABU considers too preliminary to engage in discussions regarding institutional arrangements.

Modalities

Regarding the organization of the Work Programme, we envision an initial 2-year program, with in-session workshops during the sessions of the SBs in June and during the COPs, in addition to the annual high level ministerial round table on Just Transition (beginning in the fifth session of CMA), in which it will be possible to reflect on the outcomes achieved.

We believe that in these instances we should start by sharing good practices on the subject at the national, regional and global levels, in order to identify opportunities, gaps and challenges as key points to be addressed, to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. More importantly, the Work Programme could focus its initial work on discussing what just transitions mean within the UNFCCC, as well as incorporating just transition aspects to other work streams.