

# Friends of the Earth International, Global Justice Now and the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development

**Submission: Views on work to be undertaken under, as well as possible topics for the dialogues under the UAE Just Transition Work Programme**

**February 2024**

## **1. SUMMARY**

*Friends of the Earth International, Global Justice Now and the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (formerly Jubilee South Asia Pacific Movement, Inc.)* welcome the invitation to contribute suggestions into what the work undertaken and topics for discussion as part of the Just Transition Work Programme.

We sincerely hope this submission is only a continuation of the process of our contribution, rather than the final part of it. As members of the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice network which represents millions of workers, peasants, trades unionists, and communities across the Global South and into the Global North, we recognise our unique placement to support the JTWP in its efforts to secure the social licence essential for any Just Transition.

On the scope of the Just Transition Work Programme and possible topics for dialogue we suggest the following broad areas to be covered:

- Fossil fuel phaseout and 100% Renewable Energy phase-in
- Health
- Workers, Communities and Societal just transitions
- Just Transition Mechanisms for People's Participation
- Trade, Industry, International Cooperation, and the Just Transition
- Food Sovereignty, Forestry and Adaptation
- Financing the Just Transition, Technology Transfer and Economic Justice

## **2. DETAILS OF OUR SUBMISSION**

### **→ Fossil fuel phaseout and 100% Renewable Energy phase-in**

A Just Transition is a framework which shows the justice-based path towards an alternative society and economy which protects people and the planet. Currently, our economies are based on unsustainable consumption and production practices, with fossil fuels dominating our energy industries. The COP28 decision text called on parties to 'transition away from fossil fuels'. While this is not the full, fair, and funded phaseout we had hoped for, we welcome the opportunity to engage more deeply on a just and equitable phaseout under the just transition work programme. The global transition away from fossil fuels cannot be riddled with false solutions like carbon removal technologies, nuclear, gas as transition fuel, green hydrogen, or geoengineering.

A transition towards renewable energy and the 'tripling of renewable energy deployment' needs to occur alongside the phaseout of fossil fuels. Renewables phase-in cannot simply replicate the

extractive approach towards resources and thereby replace one unjust energy system with another. There should be guardrails against extractivism. Simultaneously, it should address and decrease excessive energy consumption by the Global North and middle- and upper-income class users. This just transition work programme affords us the opportunity to enhance international cooperation and social dialogue on how to do a fossil fuel phaseout and renewables phase-in that is people-centred, democratic, decentralised and respects the right to energy access, right to free, prior and informed consent, rights of redress for affected communities, and rights of energy sector workers.

The future energy system should be socially owned and must not enable land grabbing and displacement. Communities should be allowed to shape decisions on local energy generation and utilisation and be involved in democratic decision-making. Participatory models can include community participation in energy system stabilisation and small-scale energy generation through micro-grids, and grid-tied solar PV systems. A just transition should enable energy sovereignty, not dependency on utility-scale generation.

### **→ Workers, Communities and Societal just transitions**

The terminology of a just transition originates in the trade union movements. While the current conceptualisation of a just transition is much broader, especially in a post-covid and climate changing world - it is still essential to centralise a fair, just and equitable transition of the workforce and ensure labour rights and protection of workers. Workers in sectors undergoing transition should have access to the same benefits, job security and the right to organise under unions. Concurrently, there are two parallel and intersecting supporting infrastructure to be developed for workers in transnational corporations; and workers in small micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs). Simultaneously, there can be no gender pay gap and additional support should be made available to women fulfilling reproductive roles.

The JTWP should recognise, value and compensate women's contributions to the care economy, while also ending further violence and harm conducted against them in the just transition through human rights violations and sexual and gender-based violence.

The Just Transition is not about replacing environmentally degrading and greenhouse gas emitting sectors with lower carbon, 'greener' alternatives. The justice component requires that those suffering from historical marginalisation, lack of access and voice are respected with regards to their rights to life, clean and healthy environments, and that of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). While we transition our energy, food, and land systems - local communities should be prioritised in enabling access, development, and equal economic participation for these actors. Communities in sites of transition need support and external funding to revive local and informal economies.

### **→ Health**

Global health has been injured by our society's reliance on fossil fuels. Health systems are already in crisis and need radical proactive change to be able to cope with current public health challenges, as well as the current and anticipated damages induced by slow onset and rapid climate change events. Providing clean energy to everyone who needs it will dramatically improve the climate, as well as human health and economy. Internalising the health costs of fossil fuels to the polluters' accounts will reduce developing countries' budgetary pressures. Additionally, assisting health actors to understand the climate and health benefits of their actions, realised through health adaptation strategies, will promote proactive responses from government and private institutions.

### **→ Just Transition Mechanisms for People's Participation**

In order to ensure that the transition towards a decarbonized economy that redistributes unequal power relations, the principles of social dialogue and people's participation must be institutionalised. The JTWP can ensure this by providing guidance to countries on national mechanisms and processes that ensure the involvement and agency of workers, affected communities, women, youth, indigenous peoples, and all other sectors in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of just transitions at the global, regional, and national levels. This may entail an inquiry into and study of existing mechanisms and processes already functioning in some countries such as National Just Transition Commissions.

### **→ Trade, Industry, International Cooperation and the Just Transition**

Climate injustice and the social inequalities reproduced by runaway climate change necessitates an overhaul of the global institutions, process and rules that deepened the climate crisis, which is already negatively impacting people's lives and their livelihoods, especially in the Global South. We need alternative global systems and priorities that govern and create trade, finance and investment that are currently enabling transnational corporations to operate with total disregard to human rights and environmental standards.

Current trade measures in Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and investment mechanisms like the Investor State Dispute Settlements (ISDS) and the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) are being used to create policy chill and stop governments from creating, amending, and implementing strict laws and policies that actually protects the environment and meet their climate obligations. This creates an asymmetry of power between states, corporations, and communities. Trade rules are far from being appropriate solutions or means to address climate change and aid in a just transition. The inequalities and injustices in current trade and investment systems should not be used to restrict imports from developing countries. Developing countries must have policy space to implement catch-up policies to nurture their domestic producers and service suppliers, particularly of environmental goods and services.

Article 3.5 of the Convention establishes that "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".

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) introduced by the EU and soon by other developed countries could be constituted as a unilateral trade protectionism measure. The CBAM is an additional tax, duty or fee, such as the purchase of domestic carbon credits or other forms of emission allowances, as a condition of entry into a country's market.

A 2021 report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) modelling the potential effects of a CBAM in the EU concludes that the impact of the CBAM on global emission reduction would be limited. It also predicts that the introduction of a CBAM would result in declines in exports in developing countries in favour of developed countries, which tend to have less carbon-intensive production processes. According to the report, if the EU's CBAM is implemented with a \$44 per tonne carbon tax, developed countries would gain \$2.5 billion while developing countries' incomes would fall by \$5.9 billion. implications and approach of such measures should be addressed in the JTWP dialogues.

## **→ Food Sovereignty, Forestry and Adaptation**

The energy system is not the only unjust capitalistic system in need of a transition. The way we produce and consume food as well as manage land are unsustainable. Agriculture emissions contribute up to 30% of all greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)<sup>1</sup>, while deforestation contributes up to 20% of all GHGs<sup>2</sup>.

The Just Transition towards Food Sovereignty relies on small-scale food producers and social and solidarity economy-based forms of distribution and consumption. Food sovereignty initiatives are based in local markets, promote better income for peasants, workers, family farmers, fisherfolk, small scale producers, promote fairer pricing and help strengthen people's control over commons and economic processes.

Indigenous People and local communities protect and manage around 30% of the world's land mass, while over half of all the energy transition minerals are located on or near Indigenous People's land<sup>3</sup>. It is therefore essential that Indigenous people and local communities have control over their territories, and policies that facilitate community forest management should be strengthened.

False solutions like carbon markets, land-based offsets, certification schemes, carbon dioxide removal and geoengineering are a threat to the just transition and endanger indigenous and human rights<sup>4</sup>. There can be no false solutions in a just transition.

Financed and equitable adaptation to climate change is crucial to protect people and communities globally. There can be no just transition without adaptation. Without it, the impacts of climate change may be even worse, including extreme weather, impacts on agriculture, food, water and buildings. The JTWP should enhance adaptation and climate resilience at national and international levels.

## **→ Financing the Just Transition, Technology Transfer, and Economic Justice**

Rich countries must take the lead in efforts toward a Just Transition, including providing the public additional finance and appropriate technology transfer needed to support the transition in developing countries. There should be open access to technologies through a waiver of Intellectual Property Rights IPRs for climate technologies. Just Transition finance must be new and not repackaged development aid, nor should it be provided in the form of loans. The JTWP must also address the international barriers preventing or limiting technology transfer to the global South.

The current model of Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) are not the way forward and are not consistent with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement. Developing countries cannot be expected to prioritise repaying loans over providing better social and economic upliftment infrastructure. In this regard, international cooperation and multilateral support from developed countries is essential. Developed countries cannot pick and choose who and how they support the just transition, they have an obligation to all developing countries.

Furthermore, the JTWP must address or initiate discussion on the role and responsibility of the private

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iaea.org/topics/greenhouse-gas-reduction>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/whats-redd-and-will-it-help-tackle-climate-change/#:~:text=Land%20use%20change%2C%20principally%20deforestation,also%20contribute%20to%20these%20emissions.>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-022-00994-6>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.foei.org/publication/toolkit-climate-false-solutions/>

sector, particularly multinational corporations, in implementing and financing just transition in their operations and production processes across supply chains that will be affected by a fossil fuel phaseout. This includes firms in the manufacturing sector and other sectors that will have to phaseout its use of fossil fuel inputs and by-products (such as steel, cement, food production, etc).