

**Trade unions demand   
a Just Transition**

***ITUC Advocacy demands for COP27 – July 2022***

Climate change and the response to it affects every aspect of the world of work. From heat exposure where workers die on the job to a clean energy transition that can bring good quality new jobs. Change is here. For workers in every sector and in every country. Scientists tell us the time to act on climate change is now.

Following the conclusions of the negotiations on the Paris Rulebook at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, the UNFCCC climate negotiations must now change gear and start delivering on policy implementation. **Just transition policies and measures, focused on the creation of decent work and quality jobs in all sectors and in all countries, are a crucial part of the implementation phase.**

The trade union movement is addressing the climate challenge. We are engaged and active on the shop floor, at the bargaining table with employers, with our pension funds, in national processes and with governments at municipal, national and regional level and at the UN. The just transition, included in the Paris Agreement and defined at the International Labour Organization in 2015, is now acknowledged as a crucial part of fighting climate change. Climate action must be about decent work, quality jobs, and social protection, based on social dialogue with trade unions at the table. The vision for unions is that nobody will be left behind in this transition - to a carbon neutral society, a fairer economy and a transformed global system. That is what we all need.

The global trade union movement has 7 proposals to step up the implementation level of the climate negotiations at COP27 in November 2022 in Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt).

1. **The implementation of just transition for the workforce**

The global labour movement welcomes and appreciates the growing recognition by many actors of the need for realising a just transition. With this growing attention, many interpretations are emerging on what a just transition means. And while broader community guarantees for climate justice are essential, the workforce must remain a priority.

The Paris Agreement is clear in its preamble on the labour focus of a just transition: *“Taking into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities, . . .”*

The International Labour Organization (ILO) provided comprehensive Guidelines for the implementation of just transition policies and measures that offer the international normative framework for just transition – inclusive of all its elements.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Based on the ILO Guidelines, the global labour movement proposes the following succinct description of what it takes to deliver these objectives for workers and communities:

A just transition secures the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their unions, employers and governments. A plan for just transition provides and guarantees better and decent jobs, social protection, more training opportunities and greater job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies.

1. **Guarantee human rights, labour rights and inclusive participation**

The full and comprehensive protection of human rights is required to guarantee support and trust in society to implement the ambitious climate policies the world urgently needs. Labour rights are human rights.[[2]](#footnote-3) They are an integral part of the ILO’s just transition guidelines. The Aarhus Convention (Europe)[[3]](#footnote-4) and, most recently, the Escazú Agreement (Americas)[[4]](#footnote-5) include provisions on public participation in environmental decision-making, this is also fundamental for the climate negotiations.

**=>** The ITUC demands that governments include explicit language on human rights and labour rights protection in their COP27 mandates. We also demand guarantees from the COP27 Presidency and the UNFCCC Secretariat that all parties and observers have access to the negotiations, this includes the processing of visas and access to affordable accommodation, and that all rights are guaranteed at all times for all participants.

1. **Raise mitigation ambition and create quality jobs with just transition**

The vast majority of countries do not respect the Paris Agreement objectives as their NDCs are not on their way to 50% CO2-emissions reductions by 2030 nor will they reach net-zero by 2050. With the war in Ukraine and all its consequences, the level of ambition for many key countries has dropped even further. Trade unions continue to demand ambitious climate policies with just transition measures that focus on job creation and social justice in the ecological transition.

**=>** The ITUC demands governments to explicitly include the need for just transition policies and measures in their mandates for COP27 on the ‘work programme to scale up mitigation ambition and implementation’. Governments should include just transition priorities in their submissions on the work programme and include just transition policies and measures on the agenda of the pre-sessional workshop that is planned.[[5]](#footnote-6)

1. **Adaptation needs social protection systems**

Trade unions support the demands of developing countries that want a stronger focus on adaptation. While social protection measures are relevant for climate mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, there is an urgent need to scale up social protection in adaptation. More than 4 billion people in the world do not have any type of social protection. The most vulnerable in the global North and South need health care, unemployment benefits, and other social protection benefits to deal with the impact of the climate crisis that endangers their livelihoods. The UN and ILO have established a ‘Global Accelerator’ to help ensure global financing with a target to create 400 million jobs and extend social protection to 4 billion people currently without coverage.[[6]](#footnote-7) Universal social protection is a crucial and integral part of a just transition.

**=>** The ITUC demands governments to include explicit reference to the need for national plans for comprehensive and universal social protection systems in their mandates for COP27 and in their submissions on the ‘Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation’.[[7]](#footnote-8)

1. **Loss and Damage**

Poor and vulnerable countries, which have not contributed to the climate crisis, but are already bearing the enormous impact of drought, floods and other extreme weather events, must be compensated for the impact of the climate crisis. COP27 needs to reach an agreement that includes a financing mechanism for loss and damage. The ITUC insists that Loss and Damage provisions should include social protection elements (see also under point 3 above). Private insurance schemes could play a role to address loss and damage. However, most proposals remain in experimental stages and premiums are unaffordable, especially for people in highly vulnerable countries which are exactly the main target countries, and this means will never meet the level nor scale of need.

**=>** The ITUC demands that at COP27 the ‘Glasgow Dialogue on loss and damage’ delivers on the creation of a loss and damage finance facility, including details on the way it will be resourced with annual contributions from developed countries based on their “historical responsibilities under the Convention” with clear accountability measures embedded.

1. **Climate Finance**

Negotiations at COP27 needs to make progress on Climate finance. This includes a clear indication of how the goal of US$ 100 billion a year will be reached, as well as the catch-up payment of the money committed in previous years that remained unpaid. Governments must make progress with the new target for climate finance. Defining this new target needs quantitative criteria (the Global South requires more than US$ 100 billion/year) and qualitative criteria. In the absence of the delivery of public funds countries and companies are turning to sources of private sector financing instead. While private sector funding is needed, this trend raises concerns on the conditionality contained in the projects that are financed. Climate finance consists of more and more loans instead of grant-based finance that is contributing to the higher costs of financing, inefficient, insecure and short-term methods and instead is adding to the crisis of indebtedness of vulnerable developing countries.

**=>** The trade union movement demands governments to make progress in good faith with the new goal on climate finance and that incorporate just transition criteria in all climate finance agreements. At COP26, the major donor countries signed a declaration “Supporting the Conditions for a Just Transition Globally” that contains just transition criteria. These need to be referenced in climate finance agreements to be decided at COP27.[[8]](#footnote-9) This language should be included in the work on the ‘New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance’.[[9]](#footnote-10)

1. **Just transition in Response Measures**

The only work stream inside the UNFCCC where ‘just transition’ is formally on the agenda is in the ‘Forum on the impact of the implementation of Response Measures’ and its ‘Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures’. As indicated in the proposals contained in this note, there is growing support by many actors to see just transition policies and measures as a driver for implementation. This means that just transition measures should be discussed in view of its implementation - beyond the work of Response Measures - in mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage and climate finance. While the technical work in the KCI and the Forum must be further built upon, there is no dynamic in the negotiations that reflects the need for urgent action on the themes discussed.

**=>** The trade union movement has two demands for the governments in preparation of COP27.

1) Governments must prepare to seriously increase the efficiency of the work delivered under the Response Measures. A positive example is the conclusion at SB56 to link the work of the KCI with the Global Stocktake.[[10]](#footnote-11)

2) The social partners (employers and worker organisations) require a formal place in the work on Response Measures when just transition issues are discussed. The Paris Agreement refers to decent work and quality jobs in its definition of just transition; this implies that representatives of the key economic actors involved (governments and representative workers and employer bodies) should be at the table in the national, sectoral and global negotiations.

If we are to ensure that the depth and pace of transition is sufficient to deliver the change we need to save the planet in the time, then we need a very different architecture and a very different set of rules that connect the world of climate action intimately with the world of work.

1. ILO (2015). “Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.” <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf> and ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities - ACTRAV (2021) *User’s manual to the ILO’s Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*. <https://www.ilo.org/actrav/pubs/WCMS_826060/lang--en/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://www.ilo.org/declaration/lang--en/index.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/2018/03/20180312%2003-04%20PM/CTC-XXVII-18.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sb2022_L06E.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_821167/lang--en/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sb2022_L07E.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://ukcop26.org/supporting-the-conditions-for-a-just-transition-internationally/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://unfccc.int/NCQG> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. <https://unfccc.int/documents/510322> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)