Governments not only recognize that the transition to a zero- or low-emission economy is critical, but also that it must be “just.” In other words, it must maximize social and economic opportunities of climate action while also minimizing and addressing the challenges to those affected in this shift. At the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change’s (UNFCCC) 27th Conference of Parties (COP27), Parties launched a work program on “just transition” to discuss pathways to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. At COP28, Parties will adopt the modalities and terms of reference for the just transition work programme and host the programme’s first high-level ministerial roundtable. The just transition work programme provides an opportunity to examine, focus, build upon, and advance ongoing work on just transition issues across the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, while avoiding unnecessary overlaps and duplication.

This paper provides background on just transition, as well as poses options and questions for the elements, modalities, and terms of reference for the work programme.

**BOX 1: Questions to consider**

- How can the Work Programme on Just Transition differ and benefit from prior and ongoing related work programs?
- What should be the focus of the first high-level ministerial roundtable and how can it set the tone for the operationalization of the work programme?
- How could the just transition work programme engage non-Party stakeholders: (i) to reflect their expectations in the decision; and (ii) in the operationalization of the work programme?
Climate change, global warming, and environmental degradation pose significant present and future challenges to sustainable economic development and poverty eradication. If adequately managed, adaptation to climate change, mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, and a shift to a “green” economy can offer opportunities to create new competitive businesses and markets, decent work, and quality jobs.

“Just transition” policies and processes can ensure that these economic changes are fair and inclusive, do not increase social inequality, and create real and decent opportunities for all. Recognizing the challenges of adapting to climate change and mitigating emissions, as well as the opportunities presented by the net-zero transition, the COP27 Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan launched the first work programme on just transition under the UNFCCC. The objective of this work programme is to discuss, including through high-level ministerial roundtables starting at COP28, pathways to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The preambular text of the Paris Agreement notes just transition as a guiding principle in the implementation of the Agreement, urging countries to “take 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.”

At COP27/CMA4 (the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement), the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan further affirmed that “the global transition to low emission provides opportunities and challenges for sustainable economic development and poverty eradication.” In the context of a just and equitable transition, such “pathways that include energy, socioeconomic, workforce, and other dimensions […] must be based on nationally defined development priorities and include social protection.”

The Parties to the Paris Agreement launched the Work Programme on Just Transition to discuss pathways to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Parties also requested that the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) recommend a draft decision for consideration and adoption by COP28/ CMA5 in Dubai. Parties further decided to convene, as part of the Work Programme on Just Transition, an annual high-level ministerial roundtable on just transition, beginning at CMA5.

The work programme is to be implemented in a manner that builds on and complements both the elements and structure of other work programs, as well as the workstreams and bodies under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement where just transition is also being addressed.

On April 5, 2023, the COP27 and COP28 Presidents and Chairs of the SBs (SB Chairs) consulted with heads of delegation on their expectations for the work programme. Parties discussed their expectations for the scope, design, and modalities for the work programme. They agreed that just transition is a cross-cutting issue and that there are useful synergies with other work programs and forums. Therefore, elements of the work programme should not be one-size-fits-all and should include sharing of best practices, experience, lessons-learned, challenges, and barriers.

The SB Chairs convened Parties at the 58th SB session (SB58) in June 2023 to initiate deliberations and work toward arriving at a draft decision by SB59 at COP28.

There is a wealth of experience in the UNFCCC to draw upon in terms of designing and implementing a work program. A number of existing work programs, as well as workstreams and bodies under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, can inform Parties’s choices for the elements and structure of a work program on just transition. For examples, please see Annex 1 and Annex 2.

A draft decision for a new work program could, for example, include the following options for key elements.

**GOVERNANCE OF THE WORK PROGRAMME**

The work could be led by either:

- **the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI),** which broadly focuses on the implementation and enhancing ambition
- **the SBI and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) Chairs,** which broadly carries out methodological work and promotes collaboration in climate research and science, as a joint work program with a cross-cutting approach.
PRINCIPLES

The principles to guide the work could include:

• ensuring inclusive engagement, including by non-Party stakeholders (NPS) or civil society, and democratic consultations with affected stakeholders
• incorporating actions to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement (across mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation)
• complementing other workstreams, rather than duplicating work
• expecting leadership from those countries most responsible for climate change
• centering equity
• reflecting common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDRRC) in the context of national circumstances
• guiding work using the best available science, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report (AR6) climate-resilient pathways
• avoiding prescriptiveness or ruling out certain pathways
• leaving no one behind in transition; social protection, including of particularly vulnerable groups
• addressing social and economic equity
• respecting nationally-defined development priorities
• ensuring the creation of high-quality decent jobs
• prioritizing labor rights
• ensuring equitable access to energy
• accelerating international financial cooperation as a critical enabler.

OBJECTIVE(S)

The objective(s) of the work programme should focus the work and help define the scope (below). Potential objectives include:

• building awareness and enhancing information-sharing through exchange and sharing of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned with just transition and sustainable development; and sharing understanding of just transition in the context of national circumstances
• identifying barriers to just transition and how to turn challenges into opportunities
• mainstreaming just transition
• facilitating just transition across sectors
• preparing the workforce for seizing just transition opportunities with a focus on decent jobs and reskilling
• safeguarding and empowering affected groups, often those with limited resources, to take advantage of opportunities in the economic transition
• protecting low-income or otherwise vulnerable communities
• identifying and formulating pathways needed for just transition, including indicators, and/or helping Parties formulate and implement those pathways
• enabling enhanced climate ambition in a fair and inclusive manner; rapid action to reduce emissions with co-benefits.

SCOPE

The scope of the work should consider the objective(s) of the work programme, as well as the ongoing work in other related work programs and workstreams. The scope could include:

• identifying demonstrable pathways to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement that offer concrete guidance on advancing sustainable solutions and increased ambition
• identifying pathways for retraining in energy sectors
• identifying lessons learned from the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs), shared by JETP Parties
• focusing on industries, regions, and workers that might experience the most hardship; identifying issues caused by the implementation of policies and measures to address climate change
• looking at just transition in key sectors
• ensuring participatory processes and strengthening dialogue, cooperation, and synergies among relevant stakeholders
• identifying methodologies for assessing regional or national just transition needs
• highlighting regional or sectoral pilot projects
• enhancing support for knowledge sharing or implementation
• projecting resources needed (quantity or quality) for transition
• identifying areas of engagement with the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.
NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Parties should define the pace, number, and/or timing of the types of meetings and activities over the course of the mandate of the work programme. These could include, for example:

- holding two workshops a year, and holding them:
  - in June and November (e.g., alongside or during the SBs and COP)
  - intersessionally (e.g., before/after the SBs and COP)
- holding events during the regional climate weeks to address or speak to regional challenges.

COMPOSITION & RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEAD AND/OR EXPERT COMMITTEE(S)

Some work programs establish a lead or expert committee to guide or provide technical information. Options for the work programme on just transition include, for example:

- establishing an entirely new expert or executive committee
- establishing an existing committee, such as the Katowice Committee of Experts on Impact of Implementation of Response Measures (KCI), as the expert committee or a joint expert committee.

MODES OF ENGAGEMENT, INCLUDING ROLE AND PARTICIPATION OF NPS

Parties need to determine what kind of inputs can bring information into the work programme. They also should consider what kind of outputs the work programme can produce. They may further decide who can participate in program activities.

Possible inputs could include:

- requests for submissions from Parties and NPS, including on: expectations for fundamental elements, outline, scope, inputs of the programme, and experiences to date
- workshops, including regional workshops
- technical or expert dialogues
- informal consultations
- fora
- a single or joint contact group
- working groups
- presentation of work of other workstreams and organizations, including those outside the UNFCCC, such as:
  - ongoing work by the KCI/response measures forum on identifying good country practices and creation of decent work
  - the International Labor Organization (ILO) and their “Guidelines for a just transition toward environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all”
  - JETPs
  - the IPCC, particularly on its AR6 climate-resilient pathways
- the outcomes of the GST, including gaps in addressing the economic and social implications of just transition in societies.

Possible outputs could include:

- technical papers
- case studies
- guidelines
- gap analysis
- a “toolbox” of best practices across different sectors
- an assessment of just transition work across other agenda items
- annual reports, which could feed into the high level ministerial roundtable on just transition
- compilation report(s)
- CMA decision that includes summary of actions and initiatives under the work programme and the outcome of the ministerial roundtable.

In terms of participation, Parties may encourage:

- being as inclusive as possible
- expert participation from relevant organizations such as the ILO and trade unions
- NPS engagement
- joint activities with other workstreams, constituted bodies, and/or organizations.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE WORK PROGRAMME TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

Given the related subject matter in other programs and workstreams, Parties may want to carefully consider the just transition work programme and its relationship to:
• its annual high-level ministerial roundtable
• nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and long-term low-emission development strategies (LT-LEDs)
• ongoing work in other work programs (see above)
• the work of the HLCs, including the 2030 Breakthroughs/Climate Action Pathways and the Glasgow Breakthroughs/Breakthrough Agenda
• the GST
• the Financial Mechanism and other funds
• ongoing work and initiatives linked to or outside the UNFCCC.

**TIMELINES TO OPERATIONALIZE THE WORK PROGRAMME**

Another important consideration is how long the programme will be mandated to operate and how the work is acknowledged before it is closed or renewed. Options include:

- review/synthesis at COP30 (2025), given the five-year NDC cycle—new or enhanced NDCs are expected by 2025
- review/synthesis at COP31 (2026)
- review/synthesis at COP32 (2027), so that the output(s) from the work programme feed into the second GST to conclude in 2028.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR A HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE ON JUST TRANSITION**

The UNFCCC has experience in regularly hosting ministerial roundtables. However, the first just transition ministerial will only be held just before or at COP28/CMA5—when Parties are expected to formally adopt the work programme. The following elements can be considered in planning for a high-level ministerial roundtable on just transition.

**SCOPE**

The scope of the roundtable should not only reflect the objective(s) of the work programme but take advantage of ministerial engagement on the issue, considering where ministers can best add value to or raise the profile of the work on this topic. Scope could address or spotlight one or more of the following:

- barriers and opportunities for just transition
- just transition pathways to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement
- relationship to NDCs, LT-LEDs, and the Paris ambition cycle
- invitations to constituted bodies to report out on related work on just transition.

**OUTPUTS/OBJECTIVE(S)**

Parties should also consider the aim of the ministerial roundtable and what the output could be. These could include:

- setting out political statements of intent and political signals
- establishing a platform to announce new domestic policies
- assessing progress
- giving guidance
- establishing a platform to launch new partnerships
- highlighting just transition work across workstreams
- reflecting on outcomes achieved.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RELEVANT MINISTERIAL EVENTS**

Just as Parties may want to think about the connections to other work programs and workstreams, the schedule and content of other ministerial events may shape the just transition high-level ministerial roundtable. Other relevant ministerial roundtables include those scheduled under the MWP, the ad hoc work programme on the NCQG, and the biennial High-Level Ministerial Dialogues on Climate Finance on long-term climate finance.
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

At SB58, the SB Chairs invited Parties and observers to make submissions on their views on the elements of the work programme by September 2023. They requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report on those submissions that will inform a workshop that will be held before COP28. The secretariat will also prepare a summary report of that workshop. At that same session, the SB Chairs published an informal note that captures views exchanged during first discussions on the just transition work programme on: 8

• overarching considerations related to the work programme
• objectives
• scope
• institutional arrangements
• modalities
• inputs and outputs/outcomes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as the international community continues discussions on various pathways to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, they must also consider how they will do so in equitable, just, and inclusive ways. The just transition work programme launched at COP27 provides an opportunity to examine, focus, build upon, and advance ongoing work on just transition issues across the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement. However, Parties and observers must be mindful of existing work, avoiding unnecessary overlaps and duplication, before adopting the modalities and terms of reference for the just transition work programme and hosting its first high-level ministerial roundtable at COP28.

C2ES Resources

The Global Goal on Adaptation at COP28 (Technical Paper)

Options for a Politically-Salient Headline for the Global Goal on Adaptation
https://www.c2es.org/document/options-for-a-politically-salient-headline-for-the-global-goal-on-adaptation/

A Solutions-oriented Approach to the Global Stocktake (Technical Paper)

Considerations for Operationalizing the Loss and Damage Fund and Funding Arrangements (Technical Paper)
ANNEX 1: ELEMENTS AND STRUCTURES OF OTHER JUST TRANSITION WORK-RELEVANT WORK PROGRAMS

The work programme is to be implemented in a manner that builds on and complements the elements and structure of other work programs under the Convention and the Paris Agreement. These relevant work programs are outlined below.

THE SHARM EL-SHEIKH MITIGATION AMBITION AND IMPLEMENTATION WORK PROGRAMME

The Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme (MWP) is tasked with urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade in a manner that complements the global stocktake. Two global dialogues are held each year as part of the MWP.

In November 2022, Parties formally launched the MWP. Its scope of work covers “relevant enabling conditions, technologist, just transitions, and cross-cutting issues.” Investment-focused events on the margins of the global dialogues will also consider “the cost of mitigation implementation, with a view to unlocking finance, including for just transitions.” The Co-Chairs of the MWP have focused the 2023 dialogues on “accelerating just energy transition.”

THE GLASGOW-SHARM EL-SHEIKH WORK PROGRAMME ON THE GLOBAL GOAL ON ADAPTATION

The Paris Agreement’s Article 7.1 establishes a “global goal on adaptation” (GGA). The cover decision on the GGA includes social justice—key to just transition—as an element to be included in the framework for the GGA. Parties at CMA3 launched a two-year work program on the GGA, the Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation (GlaSS work programme). The GlaSS work programme’s established objectives are to better understand and conceptualize the GGA, with a final goal of ultimately adopting a framework in 2023 that will help Parties achieve the GGA.

THE JOINT WORK PROGRAMME OF THE TECHNOLOGY MECHANISM

The joint work programme of the Technology Mechanism is composed of the joint activities and common areas of work of the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). The programme for 2023–27 will, among other things, build on the TEC’s previous work on linkages between technology needs assessments (TNAs), the NDC process, and its work on technology roadmaps. This work will focus on identifying and analyzing how the TEC can support countries in the development of long-term technological transition strategies, through to the uptake of climate technologies.

NAIROBI WORK PROGRAMME ON IMPACTS, VULNERABILITY, AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

COP21 decided that, prior to 2025, the CMA would set a new collective quantified goal on climate finance (NCQG) from a floor of U.S. $100 billion per year, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. CMA3 initiated deliberations on setting a NCQG and established an ad hoc work program on the NCQG from 2022–24. The co-chairs, in preparing the themes for the 2023 workplan, considered recommendations from the 2022 high-level ministerial dialogue, including deliberations on just transition.
their understanding and assessment of climate change impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation make informed decisions on adaptation actions and measures. It engages countries and a growing global network of partner organizations, experts, and other relevant organizations in sharing information and knowledge, bridging knowledge gaps, and scaling up actions, including through an Adaptation Knowledge Portal which shares case studies, tools, methods, and knowledge resources.

WORK PROGRAMME UNDER THE FRAMEWORK FOR NON-MARKET APPROACHES REFERRED TO IN ARTICLE 6, PARAGRAPH 8, OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND IN DECISION 4/CMA.3

The non-market approaches (NMA) work programme supports non-market approaches implemented between Parties, facilitating countries, their institutions, and stakeholders that cooperate in various areas, including the development of clean energy sources. At COP27, Parties are considering just transition of the workforce as a potential additional focus area of non-market approaches that may be facilitated under the framework.16

LIMA WORK PROGRAMME ON GENDER

The Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) works to achieve gender responsive climate policy and action by advancing gender balance in and integrating the consideration of gender into the work of Parties and the secretariat in implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement. At COP27, the enhanced LWPG noted an ILO technical paper, which explores the linkages between gender-responsive climate action and just transition for promoting inclusive opportunities for all in a low-emission economy. Parties subsequently invited the ILO to consider organizing a workshop or dialogue focused on the same topic.17 The ILO is a UN agency mandated to advance social and economic justice by setting international labor standards.18
The work programme on just transition is to be implemented in a manner that also builds on and complements the workstreams and bodies under the Convention and the Paris Agreement where just transition is also being addressed. These workstreams and bodies are outlined here.

**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**

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 (KCI) provides a platform for Parties to share information, experiences, case studies, best practices, and views. The KCI also facilitates assessment and analysis of the impact of the implementation of response measures, with a view to recommending specific actions. The KCI supports the work programme of the forum. One area of work is "just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs." It recently published a report on "Implementation of just transition and economic diversification strategies: a compilation of best practices from different countries." A review of the work programme, its functions, and modalities will start at SB58 and conclude at SB59 (COP28).

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE (SCF) AND SCF FORUM**

The Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) assists the COP in exercising its functions with respect to the Financial Mechanism of the Convention, including through the SCF Forum. The SCF Forum facilitates communication and exchange of information among bodies and entities dealing with climate change finance to promote linkages and coherence. The 2023 SCF Forum will facilitate discussions on financing transition pathways, aiming to catalyze the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**GREEN CLIMATE FUND (GCF)**

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is the operating entity of the Financial Mechanism of the UNFCCC to assist developing countries in responding to the challenge of climate change. CMA4 (Sharm el-Sheikh) requested the GCF to "consider how to enhance support for just transitions of developing countries across economic sectors and transition to resilient economies, and how to provide better access to climate finance and enablers of just transitions."

**GLOBAL STOCKTAKE**

The GST will assess the collective progress toward achieving the purpose of the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals. It shall do so in a comprehensive and facilitative manner, considering—in the light of equity and the best available science—mitigation, adaptation, and the means of implementation and support. During the second technical dialogue of the GST, Parties discussed just transition in the context of increasing the consideration of equity in enabling greater ambition in mitigation.

**THE WORK OF THE HIGH-LEVEL CLIMATE CHAMPIONS**

For the High-Level Climate Champions (HLCs), just transition is a key theme through their work and initiatives. "Delivering the Promise of a Global Just Transition" was the theme of a high-level event hosted by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the COP27 Presidency, the UN Climate Change HLC, the Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the UN in Geneva, ILO, and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Lab at COP27.


3 Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan, ¶ 51.

4 Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan, ¶ 52.

5 Co-Chair’s summary of the Presidencies’ informal consultations on the work programme on just transition of pathways to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement (April 5, 2023), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Co_Chairs_summary_JTWP.pdf.


7 Draft conclusions proposed by the Chairs, Work programme on just transition pathways referred to in the relevant paragraphs of decision 1/CMA.4, FCCC/SB/2023/L.5.

8 Informal note by the co-facilitators (June 2023), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/IN.SBI58.i8_SBSTA58.i9.4.pdf.


10 Decision 4/CMA.4, ¶ 11 (emphasis added).


15 The TEC is the policy arm of the Technology Mechanism and focuses on identifying policies that can accelerate the development and transfer of low-emission and climate resilient technologies. The CTCN is the implementation arm of the Technology Mechanism and is hosted by the UN Environment Programme.

16 UNFCCC, Work programme under the framework for non-market approaches referred to in Article 6, paragraph 8, of the Paris Agreement, Decision 4/CMA.3, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_10_add1_adv.pdf#page=41.

17 UNFCCC, Intermediate review of the implementation of the gender action plan, Decision 24/CP.27, ¶ 7, unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2022_10a03_adv.pdf.

19 UNFCCC, Forum and work programme on the impact of the implementation of response measures, Decision 8/CP.17, ¶ 1(g), https:// unfcc.int/sites/default/files/resource/2011/cop17/eng/09a02.pdf (emphasis added).


26 See, e.g. UN Climate Change High Level Champions, Submission by the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions, Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin for COP 27 Presidency, Egypt, and H.E. Razan al Mubarak for COP 28 Presidency, United Arab Emirates, Ahead of the Third Technical Dialogue of the First Global Stocktake 1, 2, 4, 5, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/HLC%20GST-TA%20Final%20Submission%20March%202023.pdf.