



# Input from the International Trade Union Confederation on the COP 30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

**Issue:** COP30 Presidency Invitation to Submit Contributions to the COP 30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels (TAFF) in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner.<sup>1</sup>

ITUC's position on climate action is clear. We demand that all governments implement transformative policies to reverse the trend of climate change through decarbonisation of all economic activities, including meeting and exceeding internationally agreed commitments and targets. Just Transition, as defined by the International Labour Organisation's Guidelines and the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and focusing on workers, decent work, and quality jobs, is essential to this process.

The outcome of the Global Stocktake at COP 28 calls on governments to contribute to global efforts to rapidly reduce emissions from the energy sector, in a nationally determined manner and taking into account the Paris Agreement and their different national circumstances, pathways and approaches. The ITUC stresses that delivering on this call to action requires governments to put Just Transition policies in place, including guaranteeing employment of equivalent quality, securing and creating good union jobs, and social protection. The reality is that most workers do not have these basic safeguards.

## Urgency to act

Global warming is costing lives and livelihoods, and without far-reaching and ambitious action, threatens to render the planet uninhabitable to human beings. It is destroying jobs and threatens to destroy a great many more. Expert forecasts demonstrate that climate change will lower labour productivity across many sectors, depress real wage growth, and significantly decrease global

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<sup>1</sup> The ITUC and its membership are still consolidating a unified position regarding TAFF. This submission to the COP 30 Presidency should therefore not be considered as endorsing or rejecting a roadmap on TAFF.

GDP.<sup>2</sup> Climate impacts are a growing work health and safety hazard, with many workers facing increasing risk of morbidity or mortality from extreme heat and climate disasters.

Extreme weather events are now common occurrences, irreversible melting of ice-masses and tundra is underway, and biodiversity is declining dramatically. Tens of millions of climate refugees are displaced each year, and the number continues to increase. The costs of inaction, in human and economic terms, vastly outweigh the investment which is needed now to rebalance the earth's atmosphere. Especially outdoor workers are heavily impacted and are often not sufficiently protected from the effects of climate change. For this reason, there is a strong need for much greater awareness of the impacts on employment, as well as for climate adaptation measures that ensure the safety and well-being of workers.

On current trends the world will not keep the global temperature increase under 1.5°C, with devastating effects. Despite their pledges under the Paris Agreement, and yet more evidence of the impacts of global warming, many countries are failing to meet their obligations under Nationally Determined Contributions which meet the twin objectives of emissions reductions and climate adaptation. The least wealthy countries, home to many of the people most vulnerable to climate change, are deprived of the resources and the international solidarity needed to make and fulfil adequate commitments. While many investors and businesses are now publicly committing to net-zero emissions, others, including in carbon-intensive sectors, are stalling progress.

Neoliberal climate, energy and industrial policies - tied to privatisation and commodification - have failed to halt the rise of greenhouse gas emissions, to secure and create decent jobs, and have contributed to major increases in energy costs for consumers and industry. At the same time, the lack of active management of the transition is placing increasing pressure on quality jobs. A transition that shifts the costs of change unilaterally onto workers has no prospect of success. Resistance to the necessary transition is growing, as it is not being supported by sufficiently ambitious political measures and has so far failed to significantly improve people's living and working conditions.

Current neoliberal policies must be replaced by ambitious state-led action and industry policies that do not leave the critical task of decarbonisation to the whims of mobile capital and unregulated markets, but instead place these in service of achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement, including a Just Transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities.

Access to affordable energy is a fundamental prerequisite for prosperity and all economic activity. The transition to clean energy must be accelerated, as it enhances energy security, can reduce energy costs, improve access to energy for all, and reduce climate-damaging emissions. Investments in transforming the energy system must create new, decent employment. The increasing phenomenon of energy poverty must be tackled through development of clean energy capacity and efficient transmission systems which bring energy to all. Governments and

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/12/the-heat-is-on-heat-stress-productivity-and-adaptation-among-firms\\_07b86e8b/19d94638-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/12/the-heat-is-on-heat-stress-productivity-and-adaptation-among-firms_07b86e8b/19d94638-en.pdf)  
<https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196%2821%2900170-4/fulltext>

public authorities need to ensure that the obligation to eradicate energy poverty and precarity is met. Access to energy must be seen as a human right.

## **Just Transition as defined by the ILO must be the core of climate action.**

Just Transition as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (hereinafter, the ILO Guidelines) must be the core of any plan for climate action, including the TAFF. The Guidelines were endorsed by the International Labour Conference in 2023<sup>3</sup> We recall the preambular text of the Paris Agreement that emphasizes “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.”

In implementing the Paris Agreement's commitment on Just Transition, Parties should focus on the world of work, workers, and trade unions. Parties should also prevent social repercussion arising from the rising cost of energy, transport, essential goods and services, or from growing inequalities and inequalities between the Global North and the Global South and within countries, which would disproportionately affect the most vulnerable and marginalised groups.

This is crucial for further progress on climate change, recalling that the objective of the Paris Agreement is “limiting global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees”. There is ample evidence that an unjust transition for workers and communities undermines social acceptance of climate action.

Conversely, there is ample evidence that Just Transition as defined by the ILO can accelerate and enable ambitious climate action contributing to peace, and social justice. Where Parties and social partners have delivered a Just Transition through social dialogue, the protection and promotion of labour rights, the creation of decent work and quality jobs, and collective bargaining, workers and their unions have supported it.

### **Examples of Just Transition as a key enabler for climate action**

#### **Spain - Just Transition Strategy**

The Just Transition Strategy of the Spanish government promotes the design of industrial, research and development, economic activity promotion, employment and vocational training policies to ensure that the transition to a new productive scenario is fair and socially beneficial for all. It focuses on maximising employment opportunities in the transition to a low-carbon development model, following the guidelines of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the recommendations of the Paris Agreement.

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<sup>3</sup> More information on the ILO definition of Just Transition: <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/just-transition-towards-environmentally-sustainable-economies-and-societies>

It is implemented through Just Transition Agreements, which include a comprehensive territorial action plan for those regions where the energy and ecological transition may pose difficulties for economic activity. The Climate Change and Energy Transition Law, approved on 20 May 2021, includes in Title V the obligation to approve a Just Transition Strategy every five years, a pioneering element in climate change laws around the world.

More info: <https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/en/la-estrategia-de-transicion-justa.html>

### **Germany - Shaping Germany's 'Coal Consensus'**

The German trade union confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund or DGB) advocated with central government to actively shape the country's 'Coal Consensus' – its plan to transition away from coal. This was achieved through negotiations within a commission that brought together affected regions, energy industry, science, businesses, environmental organizations, politics, administration, and trade unions. The result was a binding Coal Consensus that combines phase-out pathways for coal-fired power generation with a socially and economically acceptable transition, alongside targeted structural development in the regions concerned.

The Coal Consensus includes, among other elements:

- Compliance with climate targets in the energy sector—while avoiding a simple shutdown approach
- Increased consistency in the energy transition
- Adequate social protection for affected workers
- Proactive management of structural change to create new opportunities for regions and workers
- Create decent jobs and value added to the same extent as they will be reduced
- Participation of trade unions and co-decision bodies who accompany all measures including structural policies with collective bargaining agreements

Through its “Revierwende” project, the DGB actively supports and facilitates structural transformation processes on the ground by bringing together local stakeholders and trade unions. The objective is to foster the development of new stable and decent employment in coal regions through a strategic and forward-looking approach to regional development.

More info: [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/the-german-consensus-on-coal\\_eng.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/the-german-consensus-on-coal_eng.pdf)

### **South Africa - Blueprint for a Just Transition for South Africa's coal and mine workers**

South Africa's trade union confederation Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) published a strategy document 'Just Transition: Blueprint for Workers' that aims to articulate a vision centring the working-class in a low-carbon, climate resilient economy, and provides examples of best practice and concrete policy proposals that COSATU and its affiliates can use in climate-related negotiations.

More info: <https://justtransitionforall.com/reports-new/just-transition-blueprint-for-workers/>

## **Governments must act**

Trade unions stress the urgency of tackling climate change in order to prevent widespread, grievous, and spiralling economic and occupational health and safety harms to workers around the world—and ultimately to save humanity and the biosphere and to create decent employment. Failure to act on climate is a betrayal of workers, young people and future generations. Unions have moved the agenda with progress on Just Transition, negotiating the decarbonisation of industries and cities while ensuring decent jobs in the transformation.

We demand that all governments implement transformative policies to reverse the trend of climate change through decarbonisation of all economic activities, including meeting and exceeding internationally agreed commitments and targets. We insist that Just Transition with the full involvement of unions, without which climate change cannot be reversed, be central to all efforts to tackle climate change. Climate action with Just Transition creates jobs and supports a skilled and educated workforce. Governments need to commit to work for the retention, reclamation and expansion of public ownership of energy infrastructure and services. All employers need to adopt zero-carbon strategies in consultation with trade unions, through collective bargaining and social dialogue. We call for the necessary levels of investment in skills and lifelong learning needed to ensure Just Transition.

We insist on the importance of technology transfer and supportive provisions in grants, to enable all countries to transform their economies and create decent jobs through Just Transition. Global actions and resources for adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change and supporting Just Transition in the least wealthy and most vulnerable countries is crucial.

Global trade will also play an important role in the development of any roadmap, with bilateral and multilateral agreements that chart out a credible, orderly, and mutually agreed transition pathway that safeguards the workforce and maintains geostrategic balance between countries.

Trade unions call for an end to wasteful and upwardly redistributive government subsidies to fossil fuel corporations and action to prevent their profiteering while ensuring protection of households against energy poverty. Instead of wasteful subsidies, these funds must be channelled into sustainable investments, with public procurement supporting climate action, and investors making their investments conditional on a Just Transition away from fossil fuels with employment guarantees.

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For further information on this submission, please contact:

**ITUC** International Trade Union Confederation

Just Transition and Climate

Boulevard du Jardin Botanique, 20

1000 Brussels - Belgium

JTC@ituc-csi.org / [www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)