



Grantham  
Research Institute  
on Climate Change  
and the Environment

# Submission to the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme

*Views of Parties, observers and other non-Party stakeholders on opportunities, best practice, actionable solutions, challenges and barriers relevant to the topics of the dialogues*

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June 2024



Grantham Foundation  
for the Protection of the Environment

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## About this submission

This report consists of a submission made in May 2024 by the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science in response to the call for views of Parties, observers and non-Party stakeholders on the dialogues mandated by decision FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.14.

Read the decision here: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023\\_L14\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L14_adv.pdf)

This submission also responds to the notice by the Chairs of the Subsidiary Body (SB) that the topic of the first dialogue under the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) in 2024 is “Just Transition Pathways to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement through NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDs”.

This submission integrates insights from across the research expertise at the Grantham Research Institute, in particular the work of the Just Transition Finance Lab, and the Climate Change Laws of the World project.

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## Acknowledgements

This submission benefited from review by Nick Robins and Catherine Higham. It was edited by Natalie Pearson.

The views expressed in this report represent those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the host institutions or funders. The authors declare no conflict of interest in the preparation of this report.

This submission was first published in June 2024 by the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment.

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**Suggested citation:** Wang J and Chan T (2024) *Submission to the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme topics for the dialogues*. London: Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science

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## Key messages

- As echoed in a previous submission by the Grantham Research Institute to the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) (Wang and Robins, 2024), the UNFCCC can provide an important forum for developing a shared narrative on the just transition to overcome growing political polarisation around the fairness of the net zero transition, between generations and between countries of different levels of development. The JTWP should be aware of this reality and work towards bridging existing gaps.
- The range of ‘types’ of justice seen in policymaking around the transition to net zero emissions (e.g. distributive justice, procedural justice) reflects the context within which policies are designed and implemented.
- The time sensitivity of the forthcoming rounds of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) submission in 2025 underscores the imperative for policymakers to duly account for an inclusive approach to justice and capture the transformative potential of the just transition.
- The integration of robust metrics in NDCs, National Action Plans (NAPs) and Long-Term Low-Emissions Development Strategies (LT-LEDS) can improve the technical integrity and accountability of just transition policies and provide an enabling condition for the mobilisation and alignment of finance with just transition processes and outcomes.
- The implementation of adequate safeguards against corruption and integrity risks in climate solutions can help accelerate a just transition and reduce the risks of just transition litigation aimed at countries and corporate entities.

## Opportunities to integrate the just transition into policy planning

The JTWP offers the strategic potential to build political consensus and facilitate policy and implementation on the just transition at national and global levels. Governments, as signatories to the Paris Agreement and architects of the global financial system, have the primary responsibility for setting the policy framework for the just transition and integrating its approaches within their NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS.

Opportunities to create just transition pathways to net zero can be found in collaboration. Bringing together government decision-making, the expertise of affected stakeholders and lived experiences of local communities can serve to design and operationalise effective just transition pathways that are attuned to local realities.

- **Consideration of justice issues in the real economy and financial regulation can create an enabling environment for a just transition to net zero.** Research reveals that just transition principles are integrated into 38% of NDCs and 56% of Long-Term Strategies (LTS), but the extent of commitments vary. At the same time, NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS can create the enabling policy framework for corporate action on just transition. Such enabling policy frameworks can include a combination of suitable policy levers, including but not limited to: establishing social dialogue and tripartite mechanisms; upskilling and retraining schemes; social protection; public procurement; and fiscal policy.

- **Employing different conceptualisations of justice in policymaking can bridge implementation gaps in the just transition and enable a more holistic integration of the social issues at play.** A forthcoming report by the Grantham Research Institute<sup>1</sup> finds that governments have been progressively implementing *distributive justice* measures, i.e. measures that are concerned with the fair distribution of risks and opportunities that arise as a result of the transition. They are also, to varying degrees, ensuring *procedural justice* in policy planning, by including affected parties in decision-making processes – although significantly more needs to be done to ensure that procedural justice safeguards are in place across the board. The report also finds that opportunities remain to integrate other, more systemic, forms of justice, including: *restorative justice* (that seeks to redress historical social, economic and/or environmental damages against marginalised communities); *ecological justice* (concerning the balance between human communities and healthy ecosystems); and *intergenerational justice* (regarding the duties of present generations towards future generations). Embracing a variety of aspects of justice helps to address both the economic and non-economic benefits of a just transition, while ensuring that measures are implemented are attuned to the local context, including historical inequities and future possibilities.
- **A growing number of just transition financing programmes are underway nationally and internationally, and additional efforts are needed to keep up with the pace of technological change.** These include programmes that assess and guide corporate transition planning and/or government policy planning (in the forms of NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS) and help to establish strong renewed public–private partnerships. Governments, with the primary responsibility to deliver the just transition, can set down a suite of macroeconomic, industrial and regional policy levers to promote rights and social dialogue, such as through skills development and social protection. South Africa is an example of good practice. It was the first country to make the just transition part of its NDC and has developed extensive policies and processes to implement this commitment, setting out a national framework for what the just transition means in its national context, including finance. Many countries are following suit (Commarmond et al., 2023).
- **Focusing on both the ‘transitioning-out’ elements of the existing fossil fuel-based economy and the ‘transitioning-in’ of new socioeconomic models can support positive outcomes for climate mitigation, and adaptation and resilience.** Within this, marginalised and vulnerable communities’ needs and resource constraints are particularly acute. The dynamic nature of the transition also applies to **adaptation** to the impacts of climate change, with the uneven distribution of climate impacts on people and communities and limited access for some to capabilities and resources to undertake adaptation actions. In issuing guidelines for companies, the UK Transition Plans Taskforce has recently published independent advisory pieces on integrating **adaptation and physical resilience**, **just transition** and **nature** into transition planning, following a cyclical and iterative approach that allows for just transition guidelines to be continuously improved.
- **Robust metrics can be used to better communicate the just transition in NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS and track the progress of change taking place.** Utilising quantitative and qualitative metrics to measure progress and evaluate the management of the social dimensions of the transition will help to channel finance into projects and initiatives that support the just transition. The Just Transition Finance Lab has a **consolidated compendium** of just transition metrics that can be used by industry and policymakers to gain technical clarity around just transition reporting, including what to track and assess, and how. The **Assessing Sovereign Climate-related Opportunities and Risks Tool (ASCOR)**

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<sup>1</sup> Chan et al. (forthcoming) *Justice in national climate action: an overview of global just transition policies* (working title). London: Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics. The report provides an empirical review of over 150 policies across 61 countries in which governments make reference to a just, fair, equitable and inclusive transition approach, using the Climate Change Laws of the World database.

developed by the Transition Pathway Initiative aims to support sovereign bond holders to assess climate risks and opportunities in their investments and support dialogue with governments to promote greater climate ambition and the just transition.

- **Integrating the just transition into domestic climate framework laws can drive positive social outcomes and more ambitious climate action at the national level.** Research by the Grantham Research Institute finds that embedding the just transition as an overarching principle in domestic climate framework laws can help to facilitate a whole-of-government approach to delivering positive social impacts associated with climate policy (Averchenkova et al., 2024). Framing the net zero objective around economic and social opportunities is an effective strategy for strengthening political support and buy-in (Averchenkova and Chan, 2023).

## Challenges in integrating the just transition into policy planning

Current approaches to mainstreaming the just transition face the following limitations: (i) lack of understanding of how the just transition and justice materialise differently in varied place-based contexts; (ii) resource constraints in implementing the just transition, including financial and technological resources; and (iii) robust governance processes to oversee the just transition. Many of these can be addressed by capturing the opportunities mentioned above.

- **How a just transition is defined and implemented will vary according to national contexts and local realities.** The just transition should be global in reach, contextualised in approach, and intergenerational in implementation. This is vital because of countries' different adaptive capacities and resource availability to adapt to and minimise the impacts of climate change. Countries with less capacity to implement just transitions may have informal labour markets, persistent poverty, high unemployment, mounting vulnerability to climate impacts, a contextualised composition of vulnerable groups and climate goals that are linked to development outcomes. Addressing geographical specificities requires being attuned to the need for financial and technology transfers to less developed countries in the implementation of NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS.
- **Achieving a just transition requires transforming the \$500 trillion global financial system** (Robins et al., 2024). Alongside the need to mobilise finance for climate mitigation and adaptation at the required pace, it is paramount to ensure that investments are geared towards socially just outcomes. NDCs and long-term strategies need to be backed with investment in people and places, including in basic infrastructure, education and skills development, and social protection measures (Bhattacharya et al., 2023).
- **The transformative nature of the just transition is not yet captured in mainstream policymaking.** In a forthcoming report, Chan et al. review countries' approaches to the just transition and the specific policies designed to implement this agenda. Early findings show that many countries have implemented just transition policy tools to address the distributional impacts of climate policies on sectors of society, with a particular focus on workers, households and consumers. However, only a handful of countries have sought mechanisms that emphasise *structural* reform that could address deepening global inequity and capture the benefits of the transition to deliver global sustainable development.
- **Public participation and meaningful stakeholder engagement needs to be strengthened to bring people along in the transition.** Although Chan et al. (forthcoming) find some evidence of policies mentioning *procedural justice*, or including provisions to operationalise this concept (e.g. public participation, consultation or social dialogue), this was not universal across the policies reviewed. At a time when climate misinformation is

widespread, there is a real risk of backlash against policies that are not perceived by the public to have been developed in a fair and inclusive manner.

- **Robust governance processes and procedural safeguards can be seen to hinder the speed of the net zero transition – but they are integral to countries’ ability to implement climate policy.** The growing phenomenon of just transition litigation – lawsuits that challenge the justice of laws, projects or policies that respond to climate change – illustrates the consequences of failing to account for the rights and interests of communities adversely affected by the transition. It is crucial to put in place adequate safeguards against corruption and integrity risks in climate solutions (Chan et al., 2023). Neglecting these essential processes may ultimately result in the transition being delayed due to injunctions or project approvals being revoked.

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## Further reading

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