



Glasgow
Climate
Dialogues

Voices from the Global South
September 2021

EVENT REPORT:

Just Transition

9 September 2021

This session was promoted to stakeholders with an interest in issues relating to Just Transition, with a focus on participation from those based in the Global South. 69 people registered for this event and 30 attended on the day.

This event report was produced by Rhoda Boateng (International Trade Union Congress Africa) and Mary Church (Friends of the Earth Scotland), co-facilitators for the session, and has been approved as an accurate account of the day by speakers.

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Session Report

Summary of input from speakers:

Speaker 1

Dipti Bhatnager, International Program Coordinator for Climate Justice and Energy, Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Dipti focussed on the inherent injustice of the climate crisis in terms of how it affects most those who created it least, highlighting how the UNFCCC principle of 'Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' means that countries of the Global North who have caused and benefited from the crisis in terms of building economies, also have the capacity to respond to it and must step up and shoulder the greatest burden. She flagged that while the Paris Agreement is an important diplomatic step forward, its bottom-up approach is problematic: parties' pledges are neither based on science or justice.

Dipti introduced work undertaken by a broad group of civil society organisations, founded in the methodology of the Climate Equity Reference Project which shows what a real fair share of climate action looks like. She noted that what the UK and Scotland have already pledged to do is far below what a just approach demands.

Dipti also highlighted the need for equity in fossil fuel extraction, flagging a recent paper by Greg Muttit of International Institute for Sustainable Development and Sivan Kartha of the Stockholm Environment Institute. Global North countries need to be the first to stop fossil fuels on their own soil and financing them in the Global South. There is clearly a need to stop fossil fuel extraction in the Global South too - many communities are fighting such projects on the ground, including in Dipti's home country of Mozambique - but there is a principle of equity in extraction that says those who caused the crisis need to phase out first, ensuring a just transition for workers and communities.

Dipti raised the importance of finance from Global North to support the transition in the Global South as part of their fair share of climate action. She noted that FoEI had published a report in early September 2021 which shows that renewable energy has the potential to create 7 million jobs on the continent of Africa, but that such an outcome requires Global North finance. There is a need to talk about repayment of the climate debt to the Global South, and to stop illicit financial flows and tax evasion that robs the people of the North and South, directing these funds towards the just and feminist transition.

Dipti ended by observing the importance of justice and solidarity as an approach to tackle the inherent injustice of the climate crisis, the need to work together across Global North and South, workers and environmental justice movements, to tackle the interconnected crises of energy access, the pandemic, inequality, unemployment and livelihoods.

Speaker 2

Lebogang Mulaisi, Labour Market Policy Coordinator at Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU)

Lebogang started by explaining that part of her role involves preparing workers for just transition as we aim for net-zero by 2050: "for those of us involved in this work of the just transition we are at the design table of an unknown future". She highlighted that the Global South has very different characteristics to the Global North that require a different approach to climate change mitigation, adaptation and just transition. Just transition is an exciting opportunity to address stubborn issues that plague the Global South – issues also characterised by the previous speaker – for example high unemployment accompanied by high levels of poverty, South Africa being one of the most unequal countries in the world, with 44.4% unemployment (under an expanded definition). Therefore the just transition is not an option – it's essential.

Lebogang noted that historically the term 'just transition' came from trade unions, and that it is thanks to the work of the labour movement and the International Trade Union Confederation that just transition is mainstream, and in the Paris Agreement. But, trade unions don't have a monopoly over the term and the more organisations that come on board to advocate for just transition, the better. Also, 'just transition' means different things to different organisations. For workers and communities it means redress, democracy, equity, equal opportunity for all – these things form the base of the mass coalition across trade unions and civil society, and climate change gives us the opportunity to address these issues through just transition.

From a trade union perspective, there need to be mechanisms in place to protect workers and communities as we prepare for this energy transition. Lebogang noted the challenges in identifying what justice looks like – very multifaceted but vital we take this approach.

In the Global South, people are affected by decisions and actions that they have no control over including industrialisation and globalisation that they never benefited from, but live with the resulting environmental degradation. Whether we like it or not, there will be increasingly lower investment in fossil fuels because of global agreements, so transition is coming. The work that trade unions are doing is in order to be in a position where we are proactive not reactive to this, identifying the opportunities that exist.

Lebogang noted that it's important for trade unions to build capacity with workers to influence on these issues. In South Africa, a Commission has been established bringing together stakeholders including trade unions to produce a framework of what just transition must be: i.e. pro-worker, a pro-poor, and pro-community. There's a challenge when there are vested interests involved in the just transition. All the groupings who have not been able to participate in the economy must have the chance to participate in the just transition, including in particular women of colour. Job creation in the Global South as part of the just transition is key: for every job lost, four must be created, as tackling youth unemployment will only happen through mass job creation. Injustices in ownership must be tackled too - in South Africa ownership structures favour white men.

Lebogang summarised key labour movement endorsed recommendations including: investment in environmentally friendly activities; a decent work agenda; living wages; meeting health and safety standards; promoting gender equality; secure decent jobs; comprehensive social protection, including for groups who won't be able to transition; and support skills development. Lebogang ended on finance highlighting that just transition is expensive, and it's not going to happen if the Global South is left to find that finance itself. Those who've benefited - i.e. polluters - must pay, but finance needs to be developmental in nature. There is no point in producing finance that has catastrophic consequences arising from conditionality that stops the Global South achieving its developmental mandate.

Speaker 3

Ruth Nyumbura, feminist political ecologist, African Ecofeminist Collective

Ruth opened by highlighting the importance of intersectionality: taking into account gender dimensions of the climate crisis, and differences between different social groups, thinking about gender as a category and socialisation but also about race and class, and the way different women experience everyday inequality and marginalisation and the impacts and causes of the climate crisis, e.g. Indigenous women, informal traders, peasant women and smallholder farmers. The intersectional effects of economic injustice, climate change and gender inequality create conditions that profoundly affect women's abilities to enjoy their fundamental rights and live in a healthy context.

Ruth reflected on how to conceptualise a gender just transition. Finance plays a crucial role, with a need for new modalities of decentralised finance that place the lives of women of the Global South front and centre. Finance for the just transition must be new and devoid of conditions requiring structural adjustment programmes. Those who have experienced such conditionality have seen a gutting of public health, education systems and agriculture.

The impact of the state rolling back and the private sector taking over resulted in the loss of educational opportunities and increased food prices with greater adverse effect on women. The state has an important role to play: it is not possible to entrepreneur our way out of the climate crisis. Important to note the central role of smallholder and peasant farmers - these are the people who need to be supported. Too much of the support goes to the private sector including e.g. industrial agriculture which is heavily tied to fossil fuels and therefore part of the problem, to multinational corporations that come in and take over the land and water.

Ruth noted the distribution of and protection of care work. Women provide an estimated \$3tr every year in care work. The state needs to support social protection measures in this area to support women. Often when we talk about the just transition, in terms of energy, mining, the unions, the quintessential worker is male - but women are also workers in these industries. She also highlighted the importance of overcoming the history of colonisation and ongoing colonial attitudes to environmental protection. Indigenous women and communities bring knowledge, stewardship, and solutions, how to repair ecosystems and move to more liberatory frameworks, and have an important role to play in the just transition. Ruth further identified the need to think about the way we build cities and towns and how this disadvantages women. Important to think about infrastructure for resilience and the ways women live their lives.

Ruth highlighted the long history of plunder of Global South resources by Global North, and how the Global South remains a centre of extraction for the Global North. The just transition must transform the legacies of economies built on plunder, radically reimagining what our economies will look like. Measures like GDP obscure the centrality of women to economies, as well as environmental destruction, providing vicious incentives for exploitation.

Ruth ended by agreeing on the need to leave fossil fuels in the ground. Extractive industries are incompatible with the rights of women and the majority, only benefitting the elite few. The just transition must see an end to fossil fuel extractivism and build more just, resilient and equitable economies.

Questions for breakouts and follow up email

Use the following questions to stimulate thinking on key points to include in the communicate. It may be helpful to focus on the thematic area above, but please don't feel limited by this.

1. What are the key messages for COP26 on just transition?
2. What can be done to ensure COP decisions and outcomes embed just transition?
3. How should national governments embed just transition in their climate plans?

Key messages from participants

Summarised from across the contributions of Global South speakers and participants.

Speaker / Breakout 1

- Just transition must recognise the different circumstances of Global North and Global South, including equity and historical responsibility and just transition must demand that countries do their fair share of emissions reductions and payment of climate finance/ repayment of the climate debt.
- Just transition must take account of class and gender and racial dimensions.
- Just transition is about changing energy sources but rather the energy system, including changing patterns of consumption and addressing energy access and talking about ownership issues.
- Just transition must recognise both productive and reproductive work (meaning this is much broader than just an issue of unionized/ organised workers and it also involves a conversation about care work).
- Just transition must uphold and advance workers rights.
- There is no just energy transition without energy access in the Global South.
- Just transition requires a participatory approach that centres the experience and needs of women and households without access to clean energy.
- Just transition must come from a value system of solidarity and cooperation.
- Finance for energy access and renewable energy is essential to the just transition.
- Demand side subsidies and finance, as well as supply side, must be tackled as part of a just transition.

Speaker / Breakout 2

- Just transition requires state participation.
- Finance for the Global South must be free of conditions requiring privatizations and structural adjustments.
- Need for new and more equal approaches to finance, in particular, change from development aid to development co-operation.
- Workers must be involved in decisions that affect them.
- Human rights, social dialogue, participation, recognition of common but differentiated responsibility are interconnected and core to the just transition agenda.
- Finance is key to the just transition, it must be public finance.
- We cannot rely on the markets to solve the crisis since they caused it in the first place.

Speaker / Breakout 3

- Importance of an intersectional approach to multiple and plural just transitions, addressing the different way people and women in the Global South experience climate impacts.
- Just transition must reject colonial approaches to environmental protection and centre the knowledge, stewardship, and solutions of Indigenous women and communities.
- Just transition must support the central role of smallholder and peasant farmers, through the state, and must not rely on private sector approaches.
- Finance instruments must and avoid conditionality and structural adjustments, instead centre the lives of women under pressure from intersecting injustices, to tackle gender inequalities relating to the climate crisis.
- Just transition must respect planetary limits and therefore radically rethink how the right to development can be realised on a finite planet.
- Global South must choose a different path to development than the Global North and in doing so avoid replicating inequality and destruction.
- Just transition social protection for workers and households – for productive and reproductive work.
- Just transition must transform economies away from the historical and ongoing plunder of Global South resources by the North.

The following points on participation were also made and shared with Ben & Julius for incorporation in the session 1 write up:

- Participation in the UNFCCC has been diminishing over the years, but is critical this year. With reduced accredited delegation quotas, and costs and requirements related to public health situations it is impossible for many of us to attend COP26. Even when we can attend COP we are not heard, this year we cannot even attend. Where are the mechanisms for democratic participation?
- Combination of lack of accreditation, sanitation rules and costs mean we won't be able to attend COP26 – how will our voices be heard?

> [See notes from the 'jamboard'](#)

Additional input

Following the session, participants were invited to submit answers to three questions (see [form](#) sent to participants):

What are the key messages for COP26 on just transition?

- African countries need to be given enough time to transition. COVID-19 has impoverished many, especially the informal workers, majority of whom are

women. In as much as a green transition is in Africa's best interest as evidenced by the faster rate of deployment of renewable technologies in recent years, Africa needs to allow enough time to diversify from fossil dependence and garner enough resilience. In this way the deleterious impact of a drastic transition can be avoided to ensure livelihoods and incomes are protected, and no one is left behind.

- Social Protection and re-training support for all affected workers especially in the Global South who can least afford need to be at the center.
- Just transition should ensure that vulnerable and low income communities are at the front and center of the climate change, especially given the fact that some actions intended to address climate change could cause other kinds of injustices

What can be done to ensure COP decisions and outcomes embed just transition?

- There should be increased opportunities to enable more participation of South voices in the just transition discussions as well as critical decisions about the future of the oil and gas sector.
- Those most affected (countries and people) need to be present at the decision making table!
- There should be transparency and accountability at local, national and international levels with a critical and meaningful participation of all affected vulnerable groups and low income communities

How should national governments embed just transition in their climate plans?

- Social protection and re-training for affected workers needs to be included in the budget as investment rather than expense.
- Use an effective participatory grassroots approach to ensure all sectors of the population is consulted to input to what kind of just transition they aspire

Interpreting Conclusions

The following process was followed to draw out the key messages and themes from the session, and for verification of conclusions:

- Watched full video of session, capturing transcript from plenary and breakout groups as above.
- Read through Google form entries.
- Review transcript and form entries picking out key and repeat themes.
- Drew out key messages from each thematic input, breakout and forms.
- Synthesise key demands from across thematic inputs, breakouts and forms.
- Sent to speakers to flag anything missing or incorrect.

- Produced this report and submitted it to Glasgow Climate Dialogue Taskforce for validation.

Key messages for COP26 and beyond

The following is a synthesis of the main points arising in contributions from speakers and participants during plenary, breakouts and in follow up outreach.

A truly just transition must:

- **Common but differentiated responsibility / Equity**
Be based on the UNFCCC principles of equity and historical responsibility, recognising the different circumstances of Global North and Global South, which requires countries to do their fair share of emissions reductions and repayment of their climate debt, transforming economies away from the historical and ongoing plunder of Global South resources by Global North.
- **Right to development**
Respect planetary limits, and radically rethink how the right to development in the Global South can be realised on a finite planet, avoiding replicating the inequality and destruction caused by the path to development taken by the Global North.
- **Intersectionality**
Take an intersectional approach, recognising class, gender and racial dimensions and addressing the different ways people and women in the Global South experience climate impacts.
- **Approach / process**
It comes from a value system of solidarity and cooperation, human rights and social dialogue, rejecting colonial approaches to environmental protection and centering the knowledge, experience, stewardship, solutions and needs of women, Indigenous people, peasants and small holder farmers.
- **Workers' rights**
Uphold and advance workers rights, ensuring that workers are involved in decisions that affect them and providing social protection for workers and households and ensuring health and safety, recognising and addressing both productive and reproductive work, expanding the conversation beyond organised workers, and centring the experience of women.
- **Energy access and ownership**
Change the energy system as well as energy sources, ending reliance on fossil fuels and addressing the crisis of energy access in the Global South, as well as ownership issues and changing patterns of consumption, for this state

participation and leadership is essential – we cannot rely on the markets based approach which caused the crisis to solve it.

- **Finance**

Ensure the provision of public finance free from conditionality for energy access, renewable energy, take a more equal approach to finance moving from aid to co-operation, ensuring that finance reaches the women, Indigenous people, peasants and small holder farmers already delivering solutions to the climate crisis on the ground.

Appendix 1: Pre-Event Provocation

The following was shared in advance with those people who registered for the event.

Brief background on just transition

Conceived in the trade union movement in the USA in the 1980s, the concept of just transition articulates principles and demands aimed at ensuring workers and their communities are not disadvantaged by environmental protection policies. The idea has gained traction since the publication of ['Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all'](#) by the International Labour Organisation in 2015 and following its inclusion in the preamble of the Paris Agreement adopted in the same year.

Today the primary locus for dialogue on just transition is within the context of decarbonising national economies in order to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Some current interpretations retain a particular focus on directly impacted workers and their immediate communities, and therefore tend to be directed towards the fossil fuel industry and energy intensive sectors, or sectoral transitions more broadly, while others take a broader approach identifying the necessity of a justice approach to the transition to a zero carbon society as a whole. Within both ends of these interpretations there are a range of more or less transformative approaches, in terms of tackling entrenched equity issues.

It is worth noting that much of the research, dialogue and activity on the issue has been centred on the Global North. From a Global South perspective it is arguably impossible to divorce the concept of just transition from wider equity considerations as enshrined in the UNFCCC including common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities, greater vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and the rights to energy and development.

Therefore key questions of justice in the transition arise in relation to: whether the ambition and pace of the transition is adequate to meet Paris Agreement goals, and the relative pace of transition between Global North and South; whether the distribution of costs and benefits is fair or contributes to increasing inequalities; support for the transition in the Global South; meeting energy access and development needs, as well as achieving a just energy transition for directly impacted workers and communities; ongoing disparities in the consumption of global resources and the risk of further entrenching these in delivering a just transition for the Global North.

Just transition in the UNFCCC

The Paris Agreement includes just transition in its Preamble: '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,' a definition which aligns with the concepts' roots in the trade union movement. COP21 also continued the Forum on the Impact of the Implementation of Response Measures, with just transition incorporated as one of two strands of its work programme. The Secretariat published [a paper on just transition](#) in April 2020 to inform this work. However wider issues of just transition in terms of equity as outlined above arise across multiple negotiation tracks.

Formal negotiations aside, just transition is a regular issue at side events and wider activities in and around the COP. For example at COP24 in Katowice the Polish Presidency organised a series of side events and coordinated the [Solidarity & Just Transition Silesia Declaration](#) which over 50 states have signed including the UK. It should be noted that there were concerns from Global South countries around the process behind the Declaration, while the final draft was improved, a limited number of Global South countries ultimately signed on. This reflects broader concerns that the just transition and associated green new deal narratives articulated by Global North governments and civil society often fail to address questions of global equity.

The Scottish Government has identified just transition as one of two themes for its work around COP26.

Just Transition in Scotland

In 2016, Friends of the Earth Scotland and the Scottish Trade Unions Congress came together to establish the Just Transition Partnership (JTP), launching a call for a [shift to a low-carbon economy in ways which protect workers' livelihoods, create a new industrial base and deliver a fairer Scotland](#). The Scottish Government responded to JTP demands by establishing a [Just Transition Commission](#) (JTC) in 2018 to advise on the application of just transition principles to Scotland. Just transition principles and reporting requirements were also enshrined in the 2019 Climate Act following a widely backed civil society campaign. The JTC published its final report this year, and the current Scottish Government has created a Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work.

Key issues to address in thematic session

- Understanding the scope of just transition – roots, different interpretations and understandings.

- Participation of workers and directly affected communities, and the wider inclusion of marginalised groups including Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, women, youth, in developing plans to meet climate targets.
- Meeting energy access, development needs and the eradication of poverty through the creation of decent work and climate action with parallel benefits through publicly-driven investment to achieve a just transition.
- Ambition and equity regarding the pace of the transition in relation to Paris Agreement goals and the relative pace of the transition between Global North and South.
- Climate finance and other forms of support for the transition in the Global South.
- Disparities in the consumption of global resources, wider environmental justice considerations arising from these and the risk of further entrenchment in delivering a just transition for the Global North.
- The fair distribution of the costs and benefits of the transition, ensuring that inequalities are reduced not increased.

Appendix 2: Additional points submitted in writing by speakers

Additional points submitted by Lebogang Mulaisi, COSATU, in writing.

The global labour movement has worked to get a global commitment on a just transition especially for those that are directly affected by the transition from a high carbon to a low carbon economy. This work has been successful in that both the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations have recognised the need for the just transition. Global organisations have been advocating for just transition principles anchored around sustainable development and 'green decent jobs' since the 1990s. Organisations such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) have been participating in international platforms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and advocating for the just transition.

In South Africa the energy landscape is constantly changing with multiple 'transitions' already underway, either as a result of the global balance of forces or as a result of significant financing opportunities available in renewable energy. This is already evident in the integrated resource plan 2019 which has made changes to the composition of the energy mix with the significant inclusion of renewable energy.

The labour movement in South Africa, particularly the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), upon recognising the dynamics of the energy transition began actively advocating for the just transition to ensure that workers and communities are not left behind in the transition to a low carbon economy. COSATU has taken several historic resolutions on climate change. The long-standing commitment to addressing climate change through a just transition is reaffirmed in the 2009 Congress resolution, which states that: 'climate change is one of the greatest threats to our planet and our people'. The congress further notes that unless the working class and its organizations take up climate change seriously, all the talks about 'green jobs' will amount to nothing except being another site of capitalist accumulation.

In the last ten years, the concept of a just transition as a revolutionary idea containing the possibility of radical change to redistribute power and resources so that the majority of our people could have a better life has been appropriated by powerful social forces and stripped of much of this transformative content. The 'absence' is in the present cacophony of voices, those of the people most affected, coal workers and people living in mining affected communities, are seldom heard. 'Democratising' a just transition means this must change.

The labour movement endorses the following policy recommendation for a just transition (from COSATU Climate Change Policy, 2011):

- Investment in environmentally friendly activities that create decent jobs that are paid at living wages, that meet standards of health and safety, that promote gender equity, and that are secure.
- Putting in place comprehensive social protection (pensions, unemployment insurance etc.) to protect the most vulnerable.
- Researching the impacts of climate change on employment and livelihoods to better inform social policies.
- Skills development and retraining of workers to ensure that they can be part of the new low-carbon development model.