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Submission to the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme

Process for Operationalisation of a Just Transition Mechanism

In our view, the foremost element guiding the operationalisation of the JTM is the definition of Just Transition that underpins it. A truly just and equitable transition must be understood from the standpoint that the climate crisis is a product of the prevailing economic model built on fossil fuels and patterns of endless growth and extraction that violate peoples' rights and appropriate land, labour, and resources, particularly across Global South countries. It therefore requires a transformative process of breaking away from this system and rectifying the power inequalities that enable it to persist. This entails ensuring that the burdens of transition are borne by those most responsible for crises and that decision-making power and control over resources rest firmly with communities that have long endured systemic injustices.

To this end, we envision the JTM as a channel through which it is possible to ensure social and gender justice is at the centre of all climate and development processes. It must support the design and implementation of transition policies that are grounded in human rights frameworks and developed through the leadership of workers, smallholder farmers and other small-scale food providers, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and other historically oppressed and subjugated communities whose struggles for democratic control over their economies and resources have advanced solutions capable of driving the structural transformations required for a truly just transition. In parallel, the JTM should facilitate access to adequate, predictable, and grant-based non-conditional public finance, alongside energy democracy and equitable access to technologies, so that countries and communities in the Global South can pursue transitions that uphold human rights and are based on their development priorities.

In the sections that follow, we elaborate on these views for consideration in the JTM draft decision text, highlighting initial elements we believe are crucial for the mechanism to fulfil its mandate of “enabl[ing] equitable, inclusive just transitions.”

• Scope

In many countries, climate action is undertaken in the midst of polycrises of poverty, food insecurity, illegal occupation, conflicts, historical inequalities and other structural problems which are reinforced by unjust trade agreements, neoliberal policies, militarism, rising authoritarianism and patriarchal systems. These systemic issues enable Global North countries to keep extracting resources from the Global South and continue to accumulate their wealth while Southern countries become mere exporters of raw materials and cheap labour and importers of high-value added finished goods. Such conditions shape the options available to governments and must be taken into account when defining the scope of the mechanism. Therefore, the mechanism should address a range of interrelated thematic areas that are important for enabling equitable and inclusive transitions and for responding to the conditions shaping climate action in many Global South countries, while supporting them in integrating just transition pathways into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and other national policies and strategies.

Among these, the mechanism should encompass the transition of labour and livelihoods across economic sectors that remain closely tied to fossil fuel based and extractive production systems. This includes energy, transport, manufacturing, mining, and agriculture and food systems, among others. Transformations in these sectors will have direct implications for workers and communities whose livelihoods depend on them and are mostly employed in precarious conditions. Therefore, the JTM should have a role in supporting the development of national transition plans to ensure that they uphold human rights, particularly labour rights (as per ILO Conventions and standards), guarantee decent work, social protection, as well as the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and opportunities for reskilling and livelihood diversification.

Relatedly, the functioning of economies depends heavily on the care economy, much of which is sustained disproportionately by women through un/der/paid or informal labour. It is imperative that the JTM recognise this context and strive to expand public funding for health, childcare, and social protections, while challenging gender norms that devalues women's labour and invisibilise care work and recognising women's work, participation, and leadership.¹ Such measures are especially important as austerity measures in many countries have weakened public services and shifted even greater care burdens onto women in all their diversity, limiting their ability to join the labour force and access new economic opportunities.

Likewise, land, oceans, food systems, and governance of resources should fall within the scope of work that the mechanism should be mandated to address, as corporate agriculture, logging, mining, and other extractive industries concentrate control over natural resources in the hands of corporate conglomerates, big landlords and agribusinesses. This concentration drives the dispossession of communities, accelerates ecological degradation, and undermines local food systems. In response, the JTM must advance measures that expand equitable access to land, oceans, territories, and ecosystems, including redistributive policies and security of tenure for communities that depend on them, restitution and the transition to agroecology.²

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¹ Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, *A Feminist Interpretation of Just and Equitable Transitions in the Context of Climate Change* (Chiang Mai: APWLD, 2018), https://apwld.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018_Just_and-Equitable_Transitions_briefer.pdf.

² FIAN International, *A Just Transition to Agroecology*, <https://www.fian.org/en/a-just-transition-to-agroecology-3/>.

This entails rejecting false, corporate-driven ‘solutions’ that further entrench corporate control, and instead ensuring support for community-led solutions³ that strengthen communities’ stewardship over land and territories,⁴ and uphold food sovereignty.

Closely linked to the corporate control of resources that prioritise profit over human rights, ecological integrity, and care for life are unjust trade measures that shape how resources are heavily extracted from the Global South to satisfy global supply chains.⁵ The JTM should address these since the transition to a non-fossil fuel-based economy will accelerate the development of renewable energy systems that require an increase in the extraction of ‘critical’ transition minerals.⁶ Without fair and transparent trade measures, the renewable energy supply chain will only reproduce the same extractivist economic relations. This is already demonstrated by unilateral trade measures (UTMs) such as the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which is projected to penalise carbon-intensive production in Global South countries and reduce their income by USD 5.9 billion, all for only 0.1% global carbon dioxide reduction.⁷ Yet many Southern countries do not have the capacity to implement comparable policies or environmental laws and are compelled to rely on coal and carbon-intensive industries precisely because Global North countries have failed to provide adequate climate finance. Thus, the JTM should support countries in assessing how trade measures shape their transition strategies, including the implications for resource extraction and in ensuring that Northern countries provide adequate resources for the Global South’s transition needs. Additionally, a climate audit of current dominant trade and investment regimes is urgently needed to ensure that these rules do not perpetuate the climate crisis, reinforce fossil fuel dependence, and restrict policy space for just and equitable transitions. Any trade-related climate measures must not worsen inequalities or shift burdens onto the Global South, and instead should be progressive, grounded in transparency, equity, and meaningful support for the Global South.

● Guiding Principles

First and foremost, the JTM must be grounded in the **common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) and polluter pays** principles as recognised under the UNFCCC. The JTM must therefore function as a channel to realise **reparative justice**, requiring Global North countries to repair and redress the historical and ongoing climate harm inflicted upon the Global South. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) issued an Advisory Opinion that clarifies that governments have an obligation to prevent significant harm – both within and beyond their borders – because a stable climate is for the effective enjoyment of human rights. Thus, governments must adopt climate-related measures, regulate private actors, and cooperate internationally to address climate change as

³ IBON International, *Unlocking the Power of Community-Led Climate Solutions* (2024), <https://climatejusticehub.org/2024/11/04/unlocking-the-power-of-community-led-climate-solutions/>.

⁴ FIAN International, *Land for Food and Climate Justice: The Case for Redistributive Agrarian Reforms* (Heidelberg: FIAN International, 2025), https://www.fian.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Briefing-paper_Climate-land-inequality_designed_final_rev.pdf.

⁵ IBON International, *The Global Trade Architecture and the Rush for Critical Minerals* (2024), <https://iboninternational.org/download/the-global-trade-architecture-and-the-rush-for-critical-minerals/>

⁶ International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Exposing the Human Rights Cost of “Green Energy”: Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change on Human Rights in the Life Cycle of Renewable Energy and Critical Minerals* (2025), <https://www.escri-net.org/resources/exposing-the-human-rights-cost-of-green-energy-escri-net-submits-input-to-un-special-rapporteur-on-climate-change/>.

⁷ Third World Network, *Unilateral trade measures hinder climate ambition – say developing countries*, November 8, 2025, <https://twn.my/title2/climate/info.service/2025/cc251108.htm>.

part of their duty to protect life, personal integrity, and other fundamental rights.⁸ In the same direction, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on Obligation of States in respect of climate change also clarifies that governments are obligated under international law to prevent climate harm and address the consequences, including through reparations when harm occurs.⁹ Recognising and operationalising these in the context of the JTM means translating them into concrete mechanisms that ensure the right to reparations within equitable transitions.

The JTM must also be based on a foundation that centres **human dignity, intergenerational equity, and justice** ensuring that climate action protects the human rights of both present and future generations.¹⁰ Consistently upheld in both international and domestic jurisprudence,¹¹ this principle requires a **holistic transformation** that integrates social justice, inclusivity, non-discrimination, and ecological balance into every stage of transition. A key principle is **integral ecology**, which recognises the intrinsic value of nature and the interconnectedness of all life, placing the restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity alongside human well-being.

For a Just Transition to be legitimate, its implementation must be **democratic, inclusive, and participatory**, centring Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food providers, riparian and coastal peoples, workers, women, and youth as decision-makers rather than passive consultees. This also demands a **decolonised approach** rooted in local wisdom, spirituality, and Indigenous knowledge systems, challenging extractive models that have historically oppressed communities. Together, these principles ensure that the transition to a sustainable future is just, culturally grounded, and ecologically responsible.

International human rights law further requires that transition policies respect the principles of **non-retrogression and progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights**. States are required to take positive steps towards the fulfillment of these rights and avoid actions that cause their deterioration. In the context of just and equitable transition, this includes rejecting false 'solutions' that fail to address the root causes of the climate crisis. Instead, the JTM must prioritise community-led and human rights-centred climate actions including rapid and drastic emissions reductions and an equitable phase-out of fossil fuels.¹²

Historical patterns of colonial extraction and marginalisation within the global economy have also constrained the development pathways available to many Global South countries. For this reason, the JTM must uphold the **right to development**, including the ability of the Global South countries to pursue sustainable, human rights compliant industrialisation to eradicate poverty,

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⁸ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion No 32 of 2025: Climate Emergency and Human Rights, July 3, 2025. ¹ Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, A Feminist Interpretation of Just and Equitable Transitions in the Context of Climate Change (Chiang Mai: APWLD, 2018), https://apwld.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018_Just_and-Equitable_Transitions_briefer.pdf.

⁹ International Court of Justice, *Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change*, Advisory Opinion, July 23, 2025, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/187/187-20250723-adv-01-00-en.pdf>.

¹⁰ Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations (Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/new-york/events/hr75-future-generations/Maastricht-Principles-on-The-Human-Rights-of-Future-Generations.pdf>.

¹¹ *Future Generations v. Ministry of the Environment and Others*, Supreme Court of Colombia, April 5, 2018; see also *Leghari v. Federation of Pakistan*, Lahore High Court, W.P. No. 25501/2015 (2015).

¹² International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *The Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment: A Pathway to Address the Climate Crisis* (New York: ESCR-Net, n.d.), <https://www.eschr-net.org/resources/the-right-to-a-clean-healthy-and-sustainable-environment-a-pathway-to-address-the-climate-crisis/>.

generate jobs, and strengthen economic sovereignty.¹³ Climate action must not impose new constraints that foreclose these development pathways. Instead, transition processes must strengthen **democratic ownership** over natural resources and productive sectors, ensuring that the benefits of development are equitably shared.

The JTM must also **recognise undervalued and un/der/paid care work** including the critical role of women in caring for the environment,¹⁴ protecting common goods such as water, soil, seeds, forests and mangroves and maintaining community organisation and ancestral knowledge,¹⁵ alongside **women's un/der/paid work**, which sustains the global economy. This means recognising that the global economic growth has long depended on the low wages of women working in low-emission, insecure and informal sectors, including subsistence farming, service work, domestic work and care work.

Moreover, the JTM must recognise **demilitarisation as a precondition** to realise a just and equitable transition. Militarism relies on the production of weapons, fighter jets, ships, vehicles and other military equipment that use fossil fuels and increase emissions, accentuating the necessity of arms control and transition from war economies. Bombs and missiles, as we currently witness in West Asia, result in the destruction not just of communities and infrastructure, but also of entire ecosystems, including carbon sinks such as forests, and produce huge amounts of emissions. As such, the JTM must be designed and implemented using a **rights-based approach**, which prioritises the protection and fulfillment of human rights, the rights of Nature, and their interconnectedness. This includes the substantive and procedural rights of frontline and fenceline communities that requires the JTM to address historical injustices, and foster equity and social justice, while focusing on long-term transformational adaptation¹⁶ instead of temporary fixes.

Finally, gender justice must be embedded across all aspects of the JTM. Addressing historical inequalities between men and women requires **recognising the intersectionality of social identities, including race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation**. The JTM must be informed by the unique vulnerabilities and contributions of women, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other historically oppressed groups ensuring diverse perspectives are included, and that the needs of these communities are prioritised at all levels. This includes ensuring gender transformative implementation pathways with clear timeline, resource allocation and comprehensive action plans.

• Participation and Governance

Decision-making structures of the JTM should guarantee the full and effective participation of workers, Indigenous Peoples, smallholder farmers, riparian and coastal peoples, women, youth,

¹³ IBON International, *Re-Envisioning a Sustainable, People's Industrialisation* (Quezon City: IBON International, 2025), <https://iboninternational.org/download/re-envisioning-a-sustainable-peoples-industrialisation/>.

¹⁴ International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net), *A Common Charter for Collective Struggle*, updated with 2024 reflection, <https://www.escr-net.org/resources/common-charter-for-collective-struggle/>.

¹⁵ FIAN International, *Rural Women, Care and Agrochemicals: Impacts and Resistance from the Territories in Ecuador and Honduras* (Heidelberg: FIAN International, 2025), <https://www.fian.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Rural-women-care-and-agrochemicals-1.pdf>.

¹⁶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), *Defining and Understanding Transformational Adaptation at Different Spatial Scales and Sectors, and Assessing Progress in Planning and Implementing Transformational Adaptation Approaches at the Global Level*, Technical Paper FCCC/TP/2024/8 (Bonn: UNFCCC, November 5, 2024), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/tp2024_08.pdf.

people of African descent, people living with disabilities, and other historically oppressed and subjugated communities.

This requires institutionalising participation within the mechanism itself, including formal representation of these constituencies and informal groupings in advisory and decision-making bodies, clear procedures for public access to information, and mechanisms that allow communities to meaningfully participate in all processes. The human right to self-determination alongside Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples must also be a non-negotiable standard across all transition policies supported under the mechanism.¹⁷

Meaningful participation also requires addressing structural barriers that exclude frontline and fenceline communities from climate decision-making and governance. The JTM should therefore establish dedicated, condition-free financial support for grassroots organisations and networks in Global South countries to participate in governance bodies, and oversight processes without violating the principle of non-interference or the internal self-determination of these groups. This includes funding for travel, language interpretation, technical support, and independent and community-led research so that affected communities are able to engage on equal footing in discussions without compromising their local mandates or independence.

Governance arrangements must also provide safeguards against capture by vested interests that have historically driven the climate crisis. The JTM should adopt conflict-of-interest policies that prevent actors from fossil fuel corporations and large extractive industries, as well as actors that have been identified by the UN Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as involved in systematic human rights violations and illegal activities,¹⁸ from influencing the mechanism's decision-making processes. In addition, transparency requirements and independent monitoring mechanisms should be built into the governance framework to ensure that the mechanism and its policies are free from dictates of corporate interests.

Moreover, the mechanism must incorporate strong systems of accountability and redress, applicable also for corporations and business actors,¹⁹ especially in fossil fuels, mining, energy, military or digital technology sectors. Communities affected by transition-related projects must have access to independent grievance mechanisms capable of investigating complaints and enforcing remedy where rights violations occur. Regular review processes should also be established to evaluate the impacts of transition measures, ensuring that the JTM remains responsive to the needs and priorities of the communities it is intended to serve.

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¹⁷ Franciscans International and Lutheran World Federation, *Just Transition and Human Rights: Views from Faith-Based Communities* (Geneva: Franciscans International and Lutheran World Federation, n.d.), https://franciscansinternational.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/COP30_Just_Transition_ENG.pdf.

¹⁸ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Human Rights and Climate Change* (Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/60/19), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-19-aev.pdf>.

¹⁹ International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Time to Act: Securing a Sustainable Future through Corporate Accountability - The Relevance of the United Nations Legally Binding Instrument to Regulate the Activities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises as a Structural Lever for Environmental Justice* (New York: ESCR-Net, n.d.).

● Financing

In order to support nationally determined transition pathways, the JTM must serve as a platform for identifying financing gaps in countries' transition strategies and ensuring that Global North countries provide commensurate finance for Global South countries. These resources should form part of the Global North's reparations for the climate debt accumulated through historical and ongoing emissions,²⁰ as well as for the long-standing social and ecological harms caused by colonialism, extractivism, exploitation, war, and unequal economic systems that continue to disproportionately burden Global South countries.

Finance for Just Transition must be adequate, predictable, and grant-based, and should be programmed through multi-year public funding commitments that allow countries to plan long-term transition strategies. To support this, the JTM should promote a reorientation of financing priorities, especially among Global North countries. This includes redirecting public resources going to militarisation and wars, as well as those used to subsidise fossil fuels, among many other areas. The mechanism should likewise facilitate the redirection of resources towards climate action and supporting Global South countries in pursuing their transition and development pathways.

Such finance must also be new and additional to existing climate finance commitments for mitigation, adaptation, and addressing loss and damage. While Just Transition intersects with these pillars of climate action, it must serve a distinct function of ensuring that climate action occurs in an equitable manner and protects communities and their livelihoods as countries transition away from fossil fuel and extractive production systems. This includes financing for reskilling and retraining programmes for displaced workers, livelihood diversification for communities dependent on extractive industries, and strengthening public services that protect communities from potential impacts.

Finance for Just Transition must also prioritise community-led and rights-based solutions such as agroecological production systems, land redistribution, and other grassroots initiatives that strengthen democratic access to productive resources and the stewardship of the commons. Dedicated allocations for gender-transformative financing are likewise essential, particularly for investments in care infrastructure and social protection systems that address the disproportionate burdens placed on women.

To ensure that financing reaches those most affected, the JTM should facilitate arrangements that enable direct and transparent access to resources by frontline and fenceline communities. This includes supporting nationally determined frameworks that allocate resources for community-led initiatives to strengthen local economies, establishing channels for local actors, CSOs, and grassroots organisations to identify funding priorities, and promoting simplified access procedures across relevant climate finance institutions. The mechanism should also promote robust safeguards to ensure that communities exercise meaningful and equitable decision-making power in determining how resources are used.

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²⁰ IBON International, *Financing the Future: Framing the Post-2025 Climate Finance Goal*, November 5, 2024, <https://climatejusticehub.org/2024/11/05/financing-the-future-framing-the-post-2025-climate-finance-goal/>

Lastly, financing just transitions cannot be done solely through project-based funding. Currently, Global South countries have additional limitations to transition due to unsustainable external debt burdens and intellectual property regimes and patent systems that restrict access to climate technologies. These conditions coerce Southern countries to prioritise debt servicing and export-oriented extraction, and to impose austerity measures. It is imperative that the JTM promote measures such as comprehensive debt cancellation and the dismantling of intellectual property regimes to provide Global South countries fiscal space and enable them to pursue sovereign transition strategies.

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● **Our redlines**

This section outlines a set of collective demands on what the JTM must not become:

First and foremost, the JTM must not serve as a tool that rebrands extractivism or perpetuates false ‘solutions’ such as utility-scale hydropower dams, small modular [nuclear] reactors, carbon offsetting and markets that facilitate green grabbing or the theft of community land, oceans, and air under the guise of transition and allow historical polluters to avoid real emissions reductions.

Second, the JTM must not be interpreted or operationalised in ways that weaken, delay, or obscure the urgent need for a rapid, science- and equity-based phase-out of fossil fuels consistent with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The link between the JTM and the transition towards a fossil-fuel-free future must remain explicit and must not be diluted or repurposed to legitimise continued fossil fuel extraction or expansion.

Third, the JTM should not undermine the development prerogatives of Global South countries or limit their policy space to pursue pathways consistent with their national circumstances. Considering that transition processes will unfold across different contexts, it must not impose policies that prescribe uniform models of transitioning, including conditionalities that make access to support from the mechanism dependent on adopting particular policy reforms. Moreover, the JTM must not become a tool for penalising Global South countries for exercising their right to development as they determine how to carry out their transitions.

Fourth, the JTM must not become a driver of militarism and militarisation of communities including a pretext for securitising transition zones (e.g. energy corridors, mining areas, coastal and forest territories) under the guise of protecting “national” or “public” interests. It must also not be used to legitimise repression against communities and environmental human rights defenders who resist renewable energy projects, transition minerals extraction, or other extractive schemes imposed in the name of a “just transition”. Militarisation of communities particularly in places where renewable energy and critical mineral projects are located has repeatedly been cited as one of the barriers in the context of State regulation or of business conduct that undermine the protection of human rights.²¹

Fifth, the JTM must not legitimise forced displacement or strip communities of their distinct identities, livelihoods and dignity. A truly just and equitable transition cannot be built on

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²¹ International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Exposing the Human Rights Cost of “Green” Energy: Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change (2025)*, <https://www.escr-net.org/resources/exposing-the-human-rights-cost-of-green-energy-escr-net-submits-input-to-un-special-rapporteur-on-climate-change/>.

ecocide, illegal occupations, cultural erasure, resettlement schemes that destroy care and customary governance systems, and criminalisation of communities who defend their environment and human rights.

Sixth, the JTM must not become a tool that obstructs communities' right to reparations and effective remedy for past and ongoing harms. It must not shield state and non-state actors from accountability for environmental and human rights abuses nor replace binding liability and judicial remedies with voluntary safeguards or corporate-controlled grievance mechanisms with no enforcement power.

Finally, the JTM must not be a tool for international financial institutions and corporations to raise their influence and control over national policy-making and institutional architecture shaping energy, climate, and land governance, among others, in ways that prioritise profit and corporate plunder over human rights, fundamental freedoms and ecological integrity. Likewise, it should not entrench debt-creating finance that locks countries into illegitimate debt cycles, diverts public resources away from social protection and essential services, and pushes economies toward fiscal crisis and bankruptcy.



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