Submission to the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme

15th February 2025

Key messages

- The JTWP could fulfill several roles, which we describe in this submission. These include signaling global needs, setting mandates, consolidating knowledge, envisioning funding models, convening key actors, and strategizing international cooperation for just transitions.
- Priority areas that the JTWP could consider, include:
    - Just Resilience: Adaptation can lead to unequal outcomes, and an equitable approach requires recognizing interconnected systems and ensuring that climate actions protect vulnerable communities, without exacerbating risks elsewhere. "Just resilience" is a concept that can help explore equity in adaptation.
    - International cooperation: International cooperation is essential for advancing just transitions across a range of domestic contexts. This requires bringing attention to the international cooperation ecosystem—both within and beyond the UN climate regime.
- During COP29, calls were made for the JTWP to produce more “concrete outcomes”, with parties seeking a structured approach and clear timelines to unlock the programme’s full potential. In this submission, based on the analysis of potential roles and taking into account identified priority areas, we suggest specific outcomes and their modalities that could be achieved by the work programme. They include a Just Transition Guidance Framework, a Just Transition Task Force, amongst others.

Introduction

Southern Transitions, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the University of Cape Town, Dr. Sonja Klinsky, and the Institute for Sustainable Development and International relations (IDDRI) make the following submission regarding the work to be undertaken under the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) and potential topics for the dialogues, as per the mandate set out in FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.14, para. 6:

6. Invites Parties, observers and other non-Party stakeholders to submit views on work to be undertaken under, as well as possible topics for the dialogues under, the work programme via the submission portal by 15 February each year, beginning in 2024;

Domestic transition and development to realize goals under the Paris Agreement are profoundly shaped by global and transnational systems (such as climate, trade, tax) that can only be understood and managed by considering international implications and how they apply in national contexts. Consequently, efforts to operationalize equity and a "just transition" at the domestic level must adequately integrate international dimensions to manage climate and transition risks, and avoid deleterious spillover effects, especially those that undermine Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The JTWP is a critical vehicle with the potential to advance relevant strategic international cooperation. The JTWP must facilitate discussions on providing global enablers to help countries effectively implement just transitions in their context.

When developing this submission, the authors considered the negotiations under the JTWP at COP29 and the need to support the delivery of more concrete outcomes that realize the Paris Agreement's commitment to the equitable decarbonization, adaptation, and to strengthen the international response to global climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

This submission consists of three main parts: the first one describes the different roles that the JTWP could play. The second one suggests some priority areas to be considered by the work programme. The third one explores potential concrete outcomes of the work programme, as well as their associated modalities.

Part I: Potential Roles for the JTWP

The JTWP could play multiple roles, each of which suggests slightly different foci for the possible dialogues Parties may choose to prioritize. Key within these possible roles and the associated dialogue topics are the following:

- **Signal Setter**: The JTWP could be used to send signals about the direction and needs of a globally just transition through the UN climate regime, governments, civil society and international organizations, including multilateral financial institutions. In this capacity, dialogues would focus on honing global messages for the directionality, requirements, and potential contributions from diverse actors for a globally just transition.

· **Mandate Setter**: The JTWP could leverage its place in the negotiations by identifying a subset of specific tasks that Parties or other actors could undertake in order to advance just transitions globally. Here the focus would be on identifying what concrete actions (see Part III) and what modalities, in implementing the Paris Agreement, would be most powerful in facilitating this.

· **Knowledge consolidator**: Another possible role of the JTWP is as a knowledge broker or platform for learning. Accordingly, key topical issues for a dialogue would revolve around what specific learnings would be best shared within this forum, and what modalities would be most effective at doing this.

· **Funding Visioner**: The JTWP could be used as a forum to compare lessons about how funding for just transitions has worked, and develop new funding models. The JTWP could examine lessons and consider potential modalities of financing just transitions, both within and beyond the global climate regime.

· **Convener**: In a convening role, the JTWP would leverage its capacity to bring actors together for high-level, in-depth discussions about key topics of interest. This role would be most powerful when combined with other roles. For example, to facilitate the JTWP's role as a funding visioner, holding convenings with diverse actors already or potentially engaged in funding just transitions globally would be a key role for the JTWP. This role could support efforts for better orchestration of the international cooperation ecosystem.

· **Strategist**: The JTWP has the unusual characteristic of global representation, and should focus on advancing just transitions globally. Accordingly, it has potential to shape innovative international cooperation to achieve this. Dialogues intended to play a strategic role could specifically focus on identifying the global systems at play and what the possible intervention points in these could be, both within and beyond the global climate regime.

Notably, each of these roles could use slightly different modalities for the specific dialogue structure, as it is defined in Section III.

Part II: Priority Areas for the JTWP

Within the context of the roles of the work programme, outlined in Part I, the work to be undertaken and potential dialogue topics for 2025 should be informed by the need to:

- Ensure all elements in the work programme are considered;
- Reflect the priorities of some Parties, as expressed during COP29, to improve balance in the topics, voices, and evidence to deliver decision-useful outputs from the dialogues and other modalities; and
- Address relative gaps in attention and resources committed to areas relevant to objectives and scope of the JTWP.

This section presents just resilience and international cooperation as priority areas that could be given greater weighting in considering both work to be undertaken and potential dialogue topics for the work programme in 2025.

Part IIa: Just Resilience: An approach to equity in adaptation

Adaptation, like mitigation, can result in unequal and unjust outcomes. Research shows that adaptation efforts sometimes redistribute climate risk rather than reduce it, often placing additional burdens on those with the fewest resources and least resilience. To ensure adaptation is just and equitable, it is crucial to recognize the interconnected nature of economic, social and biophysical systems, which shape the pathways through which risk and vulnerability spread.

Trade, financial flows, migration and shared ecosystems are examples of pathways through which shocks or stresses in one area can create or intensify risks elsewhere, whether across neighborhoods, sectors, or borders. A just approach to adaptation demands that climate action by one actor or in one place does not exacerbate risks for others, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Recognizing these dynamics, the concept of 'just resilience' is one approach to achieving equity in adaptation efforts. This principle underscores that protecting communities from climate impacts must also address justice and equity. Just resilience ensures that adaptation efforts at every level safeguard vulnerable populations without shifting risks to others.

Part IIb: International Cooperation

International cooperation plays a crucial role in supporting and advancing just transitions. ‘International cooperation’ is not per se defined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, or the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and various actors may have different interpretations and understanding of what it comprises. Here ‘international cooperation’ is understood as policy and implementation coordination, which involves a number of stakeholders. From this perspective, international cooperation already exists in many forms and through different fora, which are not necessarily coordinated on climate action[1].

At the national level, just transition considerations often reflect the unique circumstances, challenges, and development priorities of each country. The sovereignty of states, their right to development, and the need to respect these specific contexts are key elements in shaping transition pathways. International dimensions of domestic just transitions are equally significant, especially as the world increasingly recognizes the interconnectedness of global

[1] More on international cooperation: https://ddpinitiative.org/ddp-annual-report-2023/

challenges. This is clearly articulated under frameworks like Just Resilience (see Part II.a), which underscores the need to address the socio-economic risks and impacts of the global transition on domestic populations. In this sense, achieving SDGs, including climate action (SDG 13), energy access (SDG 7), and addressing inequality (SDG 10), requires coordinated action across borders, acknowledging how national actions ripple through the international system and affect other countries[2].

Given the complex and interconnected nature of these challenges, and dispersion of the various fora that steer different elements of the international cooperation ecosystem, multilateral discussions become essential for managing the interfaces between national policies and international governance. Effective multilateral engagement allows countries to collectively design strategies that mitigate negative socio-economic consequences of the global transitions, ensuring equitable sharing of opportunities. It also helps align national domestic goals with international commitments, fostering cooperation to address the spillover effects of policy decisions across borders[3], including on climate risks[4].

Bringing attention to the international cooperation ecosystem—both within and beyond the UNFCCC—is critical for advancing just global transitions. While there has been significant focus on domestic just transition action, particularly around inclusivity in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and labour-related challenges, this focus remains largely limited to national boundaries. In this regard, the JTWP dialogues held in 2024[5] were valuable for experience sharing and fostering learning, but they fell short in addressing the broader, systemic issues that require international collaboration.

Furthermore, achieving equitable access to opportunities in the transition demands action in the UN climate regime and beyond. Fair ambition in the UNFCCC applies to a wide scope – mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, finance, and even transparency. The application of differentiation across the Articles of the Paris Agreement varies, with some obligations shared by both developed and developing countries, while others are differentiated. The

[2] https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/map/spillovers

[3] International cooperation on technology development and transfer accompanied by capacity building, knowledge sharing, and technical and financial support can accelerate the global diffusion of mitigation technologies, practices and policies at national and sub-national levels, and align these with other development objectives (E.6.2). IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, A. Reisinger, R. Slade, R. Fradera, M. Pathak, A. Al Khourdajie, M. Belkacemi, R. van Diemen, A. Hasija, G. Lisboa, S. Luz, J. Malley, D. McCollum, S. Some, P. Vyas, (eds.)]. In: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, R. Slade, A. Al Khourdajie, R. van Diemen, D. McCollum, M. Pathak, S. Some, P. Vyas, R. Fradera, M. Belkacemi, A. Hasija, G. Lisboa, S. Luz, J. Malley, (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA. doi: 10.1017/9781009157926.001.

[4] More on adaptation transboundary risks: https://adaptationwithoutborders.org/

[5] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sb2024_07adv.pdf

Paris Agreement promotes inclusive cooperation, which is essential for achieving ambitious and equitable climate outcomes. In mitigation, for instance, all countries include mitigation efforts in their NDCs, while a focus on just transitions to net-zero emissions acknowledges differing national circumstances. Transparency frameworks offer flexibility to developing countries, operationalizing nuanced differentiation. However, it remains unclear how national adaptation plans will address equity, and guidelines may be helpful in clarifying this.

Beyond the UNFCCC negotiations, equitable and just transitions require engaging actors such as the private sector, international organizations, development partners, and finance players. These stakeholders must be guided in a way that prioritizes fairness and equity, ensuring that their actions support a just global transition. This is particularly important for blocs that have been resistant to such considerations, as addressing equity can ultimately bring benefits not only to those most vulnerable but also to a broad range of stakeholders.

Part III: Exploring potential concrete outcomes

During COP29, several parties, negotiating groups, and sub-groups called for the work programme to produce more “concrete outcomes”. These calls were motivated by a variety of objectives, including a desire to expand the role and activities of the work programme, and wanting a more structured approach including clear timelines and outputs. Moreover, parties also expressed that the JTWP has an untapped potential, which fails to be realized through its two current modalities of party and non-party stakeholders’ dialogues, and high-level ministerial round tables. In its current form, the work programme's contribution to the full and integrated implementation of the Paris Agreement is impeded by the absence of concrete outcomes, limiting the operationalisation, and therefore impact, of the JTWP.

Broadly shared support for “concrete outcomes” was reflected in successive rounds of negotiated draft decision text, calling for the submission of views on the concrete outcomes for achieving the elements of the work programme. While COP29 concluded without any decision on the JTWP, and therefore no agreement on the issue of "concrete outcomes"[6], the negotiations signalled an interest and need to better define the JTWP’s full potential and possible concrete outcomes.

This submission presents ideas to provoke the collective imagination of the JTWP, to inform the design and definition of concrete outcomes and related additional work to be undertaken.

[6] Presidency text on United Arab Emirates just transition work programme, November 2024. https://unfccc.int/documents/644440 Paragraph 7. Invites Parties, observers and other stakeholders to submit via the submission portal by 15 February 2025 views on the concrete outcomes for achieving the elements of the work programme set out in paragraph 2 of decision 3/CMA.5 and requests the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies, with the assistance of the secretariat, to prepare a compilation of the views submitted, for consideration by the subsidiary bodies at their sixty-second sessions (June 2025)

The table below provides an illustrative set of options that would concretize and operationalize elements of the JTWP, with a focus on priority areas, such as just resilience and international cooperation. These options are linked to the roles identified in Part I.

The "concrete outcomes" from the work programme would contribute to broader outcomes such as

1. Operationalizing fairness and equity into the goals of the Paris Agreement, domestic climate action and non-state climate action;
2. Facilitating alignment to avoid undermining, and missing opportunities to amplify, just transitions within and outside of the UN climate regime; and
3. Delivering more balance with respect to the attention and resources to just resilience (adaptation), international cooperation (including international dimensions impacting opportunities, challenges and barriers to delivering just transitions); and fair access to the transitions' economic opportunities.

Table 1: Potential concrete outcomes for the UAE JTWP

Concrete Outcomes	Primary Modalities	Role
Just transition guidance framework, such as that proposed by the African Group during COP29 (a "Global just transitions guidance framework for the integration of principles of equity and fairness in the implementation of climate action within and outside of the UN climate regime, across domestic and global scales, including sending signals as appropriate") Such a guidance framework could: ● Provide supportive principles for the implementation of fair access to opportunities, fair decarbonization, fair adaptation, and fair support (including financing for just transitions) ● Curate available resources (frameworks, methods, tools and information resources coupled with a balanced expert review), identify gaps and call for new resources.to fill gaps ● Assist negotiators and practitioners ● Offer a non-exhaustive range of options for dealing with each element of the JTWP, for different actors and applications, and options for the operationalization of justice transitions (facilitative guidance in the development and implementation of interventions (projects, programmes, ventures, etc.) across scales. ● Be a living document. The technical guidelines should not be prescriptive, and countries and practitioners could decide on the specific steps for their national processes. They could be developed in a way that seeks to enhance the coherence of	Guidance Development	Knowledge Consolidation; Signal

climate action and development planning and implementation within and across countries and sectors, rather than duplicating efforts undertaken or underway. They would be intended to facilitate country-owned, country-driven action, that seeks to harness and build upon national-level capacity, with support from various partners, as appropriate.		
Just Transition Task Force or Facilitative Committee to: ● Improve existing activities (dialogues) to be more balanced and to produce more decision-useful outputs ● Determine additional modalities and outputs to consider for the JTWP to guide and send signals across and outside of the UN climate regime ● Drive multiple activities to contribute towards the overall objective	Facilitative institution	Convene and strategize
Identify, curate, mobilize and share just transition relevant knowledge, such as a Just transition knowledge portal and implementation tools.	Knowledge consolidation	Consolidate
Improve existing modalities through additional ● Analytical value (e.g. recommendations / answers to "so what" questions) ● Balance (in terms of topics, voices, and evidence)	Dialogues and High-Level Ministerial Round Tables (HLMRT)	Convene
Request Troika, as part of Roadmap to Mission 1.5 to include discussions on just transitions as part of its planned convenings, to ensure this perspective is integrated in the enhancement of international cooperation in support of climate action[7]. Specific goals of these convenings could be:	Decision	Mandate

[7] More on: Ngwadla, X., Torres Gunfaus, M., Deprez, A. (2024). Mission 1.5: Enhancing international cooperation, making the Paris Climate Agreement's goals possible. IDDRI, Policy Brief N°04/24.Available at: https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Propositions/202410-PB0424-Mission%201.5_2.pdf

• Key actors of the international cooperation ecosystem outside the global climate regime recognize the importance of positioning climate action within the country's socio-economic development strategies, as such international commitments on mitigation and adaptation must be part of a system-wide pursuit of development. • Parties to share views on their experiences in interacting with the international cooperation ecosystem, including necessary changes to support national action.		
Mobilize observers to deliver knowledge for more balanced and targeted inputs for the work programme (e.g. inform the research and programmatic focus of organizations such as ILO and organizations embedded in the Global South), for example: • International challenges, barriers and potential solutions for enabling fair access to the transition's economic opportunities • Just transition priorities within the area of adaptation, noting in particular transboundary risks and interconnected systems, and the risk adaptation presents to achieving just transition pathways. • Recommendations to inform guidance for the integration of principles of equity and fairness in the implementation of climate action within and outside of the UNFCCC, across domestic and global scales, including sending signals as appropriate.	Observer calls	Mandate
Promote innovative mechanisms to operationalize just transitions. Potential examples, to ignite imaginations and concretise potential outcomes, include: • Just Value Chain Transition Mechanisms • Just Transition Buyers Coalitions	Multiple & cross-cutting modalities	Signal and envision

• Just Industrial Clusters (regional) • Non energy sector and regional Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) • Awareness raising and education programmes • etc.		