

Issues and Considerations for the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme

Discussion Paper

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Center for Climate and Energy Solutions

A. Summary

1. The establishment of the Just Transition Work Programme (**JTWP**) and its inclusion on the agenda of the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (**CMA**) reflects the greater awareness and engagement by Parties on just transition and its inextricable relationship in addressing the challenges and opportunities of shifting to net-zero and climate-resilient economies. There is growing acknowledgment that an international approach to the just transition to clean energy should strive to adopt people-centric and whole-of-economy approaches that, for example involve all segments of society, including those most impacted by climate change; create green and decent jobs; and enhance adaptation and resilience.
2. The 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**) established a work programme on just transition. It was operationalized at COP28 as the United Arab Emirates JTWP. Two dialogues (in 2024) and two high-level ministerial round tables (at COP28 and COP29) have taken place under the JTWP to date. At COP29, in considering the work of the JTWP, Parties were unable to resolve several differences and did not adopt a decision on its further scope, direction of the work, or its outcomes. Negotiations under the JTWP agenda item will resume at the 62nd Subsidiary Bodies meeting (**SB62**) in Bonn in June 2025.
3. The JTWP is mandated to hold two dialogues and a high-level ministerial round table (**HLMRT**) every year, and for its work will inform the second global stocktake (**GST**)—which will start in 2026. Establishing clear priorities for the JTWP and ensuring an effective year of work in 2025 that can be useful to the implementation of Parties' nationally determined contributions (**NDCs**) and national adaptation plans (**NAPs**) will be important for ambitious climate action and enhanced international cooperation—a key part of the GST mandate. Making progress under the JTWP will also be important for setting the stage for the JTWP's review next year and considering its work beyond 2026.
4. The JTWP has important linkages with other work programs and processes. As such it should be conducted in a manner that builds on and complements the workstreams and bodies under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement where just transition is addressed. At the HLMRT held during COP29, ministers highlighted that the JTWP can address the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of climate action, linking the work to the Sustainable Development Goals and other multilateral efforts.
5. Implemented well, the JTWP could play an important role in addressing some of the barriers preventing transformative levels of climate action pursuant to the Paris Agreement.

Questions for consideration

- What prevented an outcome on just transition at COP29?
- How can Parties advance agreement on the scope and direction of future work for the JTWP?
- How could the cross-cutting nature of just transition help to build trust and inform other work under the CMA?
- What should be the main elements of a decision under the JTWP at COP30?

B. Context

6. At COP27, Parties to the Paris Agreement launched the work program on just transition¹ to discuss pathways to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. The work program will be implemented in a manner that also builds on and complements the workstreams and bodies under the Convention and Paris Agreement where just transition is being addressed.
7. At COP28, Parties operationalized the JTWP² and adopted its major thematic elements. The JTWP will hold two dialogues each year and a HLMRT. The SBs will recommend a draft decision to guide the work of the JTWP for consideration and adoption by the CMA each year. In addition to annual summary reports on the dialogues to be prepared by the SB Chairs, the UNFCCC secretariat is tasked with preparing a summary report on the activities under the JTWP that will inform GST2, including its technical dialogue. Parties will review the effectiveness and efficiency of the JTWP at CMA8 in 2026, coinciding with the start of GST2.
8. The JTWP completed its first year of full work in 2024, which included holding two dialogues³ and its second HLMRT.⁴ Nevertheless, under CMA6 at COP29, Parties were unable to resolve a number of differences and did not adopt a decision on the further scope and direction of work of the JTWP. Many of these issues and elements were raised at COP29 by ministers in the second HLMRT on just transition. A draft Presidency decision text was seen by some as lacking key elements and the just transition discussion was one of several that continued into the second week of COP29, in parallel to efforts to negotiate the new collective quantified goal on finance—the headline outcome in Baku.⁵
9. Discussions to guide implementation of the JTWP will resume at SB62 in Bonn, with the expectation that the CMA adopt a draft decision on those recommendations at CMA7.⁶ The two dialogues and HLMRT will go ahead in 2025 as mandated.

C. Consideration of the Implementation of the JTWP

10. The preambular text of the Paris Agreement notes just transition as a guiding principle in its implementation, urging countries to “take into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the create of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities.”⁷
11. Climate change, global warming, and environmental degradation pose significant present and future challenges to sustainable economic development and poverty eradication. If adequately managed, adaptation to climate change, mitigation of greenhouse gases emissions, and a shift to a “green”

economy can offer opportunities to create new competitive businesses and markets, decent work, and quality jobs.

12. In the first year of the JTWP, Parties grappled with scope and balance of the emerging work of the JTWP. Many of these issues and elements were raised at COP29 by ministers and other high-level representatives in the second HLMRT on just transition, including:⁸

- no “one-size-fits-all” approach
- holistic, people-centric and whole-of-society approaches
- multi-sectoral and whole-of-economy approaches
- creating green and decent jobs and empowering the workforce
- expanding the concept of workforce
- leaving no one behind
- respecting, promoting, and considering human rights
- integrating just transition pathways into NDCs, NAPs, and other national climate plans
- adaptation
- loss and damage
- scaling up means of implementation
- strengthening international cooperation
- mainstreaming just transition in international frameworks
- developing a guidance framework.

13. Other issues raised by Parties at CMA6 included whether and how the scope of the work could address:

- labor rights
- ensuring that the JTWP fosters real action and delivers tangible outcomes
- the outcome of the first GST, which includes targets and signals for the energy transition
- unilateral trade measures
- provision of support to developing countries for implementation of just transitions.

D. Cross-cutting Considerations for the JTWP

14. As Parties engage further in 2025 on the implementation of the JTWP, it is important to recall that the JTWP has important linkages with other work programs and processes and should be implemented in a manner that also builds on and complements the workstreams and bodies under the Convention and Paris Agreement where just transition is being addressed. Complementary work could include:

- processes and work related to Global Goal on Adaptation, such as promoting resilient infrastructure, food systems and health services, and adaptive social protection in the context of poverty eradication and livelihoods
- the Sharm-el-Sheikh Mitigation Ambition and Implementation Work Programme, such as including just transition elements in the global dialogues and investment-related events
- the Joint Work Programme of the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism, including ongoing work launching the technology implementation programme
- those processes under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol that focus on the impact of implementation of response measures.

15. The JTWP is linked to the GST in important ways. The JTWP was operationalized at COP28, at which the first GST concluded. Parties decided the JTWP will be implemented with a view to inform the second global stocktake (*GST2*). Review of the work of the JTWP will take place same year that GST2 will start, in 2026.
16. Advancing just transition could be a critical element of enhanced international cooperation—the second part of the mandate for the GST.⁹ As noted by ministers during the HLMRT, effective just transition can build the trust needed for the implementation of transformative and holistic approaches to climate action. Future work under the JTWP could contribute to a lens or framework for just transition that can inform domestic climate policies. It could also help better understand opportunities for international partnerships for technical and/or financial assistance that can enhance international cooperation in this critical decade.
17. The JTWP could also complement related initiatives and efforts, such as the Troika’s Mission 1.5,¹⁰ the Marrakech Partnership, and the work of the UN High Level Climate Champions, particularly in the context of implementing the 2030 Climate Solutions.¹¹ At COP29, ministers also highlighted that the JTWP can address the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of climate action, linking the work to the Sustainable Development Goals and other multilateral efforts.
18. As such, the JTWP presents a rare opportunity for Parties to have a holistic discussion about: potential impacts associated with the transition; mitigation action; and how to make communities and economies more resilient. The JTWP can provide a forum to link related work under the CMA to development priorities, and for Parties to share on challenges and opportunities in supporting communities and economies through a just transition. For those reasons, it may also be able to send signals or messages to domestic audiences in more accessible ways than outcomes under other agenda items.
19. Given the broad scope, Parties may want to more carefully consider the modalities of the work. Shifting to a dialogue may provide a more open-ended forum, where Parties can freely share experiences and take lessons learned from case studies. However, it may be harder to generate important political signals from a dialogue. On the other hand, a more structured work program on just transition could, for example, develop a menu of best practice or options and, perhaps, take on an extended timeline to ensure the inclusive participation by Parties and stakeholders around all issues of interest. However, Parties would need to negotiate these outcomes and signals annually and could again fail to reach shared common ground or vision for progress.
20. The JTWP negotiation process at COP30 could take on the nature of a “mutirão,” a concept that the incoming COP30 Presidency has introduced, referring to a community coming together to work on a shared task, whether harvesting, building, or supporting one another.¹²

E. Conclusion

21. Parties should carefully consider the relationship between the scope and the type of engagement Parties want to address under the JTWP. While a defined scope, perhaps on a few issues, can focus work, a more expansive scope could provide platform for a holistic discussion of all the issues raised by Parties. What kind of negotiated outcome do Parties want for the work of the JTWP: a reflection on the work, a workplan or timeline, or political signals?
22. As such, establishing clear priorities for the JTWP and ensuring an effective year of work that can inform Parties’ NDC and NAP implementation will be important for ambitious climate action and enhanced international cooperation, as well as setting the stage for a review of the JTWP next year.

F. References

- ¹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [hereinafter UNFCCC], *Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan, VIII. Implementation – pathways to just transition*, Decision 1/CMA.4, ¶ 52 (March 17, 2023), <https://unfccc.int/documents/626569>.
- ² UNFCCC, *United Arab Emirates just transition work programme*, Decision 3/CMA.5, ¶¶ 1-2 (March 15, 2024), <https://unfccc.int/documents/637073>.
- ³ The topics of the two dialogues in 2024 were: (1) Just transition pathways to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement through NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDs; and (2) Ensuring support for people-centric and equitable just transition pathways with a focus on the whole-of-society approach and workforce. See UNFCCC, *Dialogues under the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme Annual summary report by the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies*, ¶¶ 8, 10 (November 9, 2024), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sb2024_07adv.pdf.
- ⁴ UNFCCC, *Summary Second annual high-level ministerial round table on just transition*, ¶5 (December 19, 2024), <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Second%20Annual%20HLMRT%20on%20JT%20-%20Summary%20by%20COP29%20President.pdf>.
- ⁵ UNFCCC, *Presidency text on United Arab Emirates just transition work programme* (November, 16 2024), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UAE_just_transition_DC_1.pdf.
- ⁶ See “Latest News,” *United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme*, UNFCCC, accessed February 24, 2024, <https://unfccc.int/topics/just-transition/united-arab-emirates-just-transition-work-programme> (The Chairs of the subsidiary bodies invite 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 in 2025 via the submission portal by February 15, 2025).
- ⁷ UNFCCC, “Paris Agreement,” preamble, conclusion date: December 12, 2015, United Nations Treaty Series Online, registration no. I-54113, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203156/v3156.pdf>.
- ⁸ UNFCCC, *Summary Second annual high-level ministerial round table on just transition*, ¶5 (December 19, 2024), <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Second%20Annual%20HLMRT%20on%20JT%20-%20Summary%20by%20COP29%20President.pdf>.
- ⁹ The mandate of the GST states “[t]he outcome of the global stocktake shall inform Parties in updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support in accordance with the relevant provisions of this Agreement, as well as in enhancing international cooperation for climate action.” UNFCCC, *Adoption of the Paris Agreement*, Decision 1/CP.21, Annex, Article 14, ¶ 3 (January 29, 2016), <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf#page=2>.
- ¹⁰ Mission 1.5 aims to “significantly enhance international cooperation and the international enabling environment to stimulate ambition in the next round of nationally determined contributions, with a view to enhancing action and implementation over this critical decade and keeping 1.5°C within reach.” UNFCCC, *Outcome of the first global stocktake*, Decision 1/CMA.5, ¶ 191 (March 15, 2024), <https://unfccc.int/documents/637073>.
- ¹¹ “2030 Climate Solutions: An implementation roadmap,” UNFCCC, accessed March 3, 2025, <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/engagement/marrakech-partnership-for-global-climate-action/pathways/2030-climate-solutions-an-implementation-roadmap>.
- ¹² André Aranha Corrêa do Lago, First Letter from the President of COP30, Ambassador André Corrêa do Lago (March 10, 2025), <https://cop30.br/en/brazilian-presidency/letter-from-the-brazilian-presidency>.