

Modalities, work programme and functions under the Paris Agreement of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures (SBSTA/SBI)

Views from the International Trade Union Confederation

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Context

Parties to the Paris Agreement agreed to initiate the discussion on "the modalities, work programme and functions of the Forum on the Impact of the Implementation of response measures to address the effects of the implementation of response measures under the [Paris] Agreement by enhancing cooperation amongst Parties on understanding the impacts of mitigation actions under the Agreement and the exchange of information, experiences, and best practices amongst Parties to raise their resilience to these impacts.

In decision FCCC/SB/2016/L.3 the SBI and the SBSTA invited Parties and observer organizations to submit by 12 September 2016 their views on the modalities, work programme and functions under the Paris Agreement of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures.

The ITUC, representing 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and its 333 national affiliates, presents this submission, aiming at providing ideas on the modalities, content of the work programme and functions the Forum could have, in order to support the operationalization of Parties' commitment to secure a Just Transition for the workforce, which creates Decent Work and good quality jobs, as stated in the Paris Agreement, as well as supporting cooperation between Parties in ensuring the Paris Agreement is implemented with no delay.

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What is Just Transition?

“Just Transition” is the conceptual framework with which the labour movement captures the complexities of the transition towards a low-emission and climate-resilient economy, bringing together the public policy needs so that we can maximise the benefits of climate action and minimise the hardships for workers and their communities in this transition. If the transitional needs will vary depending on the countries and regions, certain policies will need to be applied everywhere:

1. Sound investments in low-emission and labour-intensive technologies and sectors: these investments must be undertaken with due consultation with all those affected, respecting human and labour rights, and Decent Work principles.
2. Research and early assessment of social and employment impacts of climate policies.
3. Social dialogue and democratic consultation of social partners
4. Training and skills development which are key to support new technologies’ deployment and foster industrial change.
5. Social protection, along with active labour markets policies.
6. Local economic diversification plans to support decent work and provide community stability in the transition. Communities should not be left on their own for managing the impacts of the transition as this will not lead to a fair distribution of costs and benefits.

If many of these policies need to be applied at the national and local level, trade unions and many others are convinced that international dialogue on the best means to achieve it and the sharing of best practice among countries would contribute to fostering progress on climate action, reassuring workers on the processes that will be designed domestically to accompany the world of work in the transformation.

Summary of developments on Just Transition language under the UNFCCC

Since COP16 in Cancun, Parties to the UNFCCC have expressed their support to Just Transition language, adopted for the first time in *Decision 1/CP16*

1. *Under section I, A shared vision for long-term cooperative action, paragraph 10, governments* (document available at: http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_16/items/5571.php)

“10. Realizes that addressing climate change requires a paradigm shift towards building a low-carbon society that offers substantial opportunities and ensures continues high growth and sustainable development, based on innovative technologies and more sustainable production and consumption and lifestyles, while ensuring a just transition of the workforce that creates decent work and quality jobs.”

2. *Under mitigation, in the context of the economic and social consequences of response measures:*

“Recognizing the importance of avoiding or minimising negative impacts of response measures on social and economic sectors, promoting a just transition of the workforce, the creating of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities and strategies and contributing to building new capacity for both production and service-related jobs in all sectors, promoting economic growth and sustainable development.”

References to Just Transition were confirmed in CP17 as well. As a consequence, subsidiary bodies have dealt with the issue in workshops and Parties have expressed their support to Just Transition being part of future discussions. However, we stress the need for this topic to be anchored in the new climate agreement, so that Just Transition and Decent Work are recognised within the renewed scope of the “response measures” issue.

In 2015 to major international steps were taken on Just Transition:

The Paris Agreement referred to just transition as part of the Preamble of the Agreement, which provides the context for taking climate action:

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,

The SBI/SBSTA decided in 11/CP.21 to adopt a work programme on Response measures comprising two areas: (a) Economic diversification and transformation; FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.2 26 (b) Just transition of the workforce, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs;

Which purpose and consequent modalities for the Forum on Response Measures under the Paris Agreement

Decision 11/CP21 and the Paris agreement opens up interesting opportunities for making progress on Just Transition, so that Parties can strengthen their knowledge on the challenges, opportunities and policy options available on this topic, enabling the elaboration of recommendations to Parties and stakeholders.

Trade unions believe the Forum should be **complementary** and not overlap with existent fora on Just Transition (ie ILO) and be **pertinent**, serving the work of national climate experts and stakeholders.

Modalities

Modalities for the Forum will influence the content Parties can engage in. On the specific issue of Just Transition, which is clearly an issue trade union see as an integral part of the Paris Agreement forum and work programme, participation from labour and social affairs experts, working in tandem with their climate counterparts would certainly allow better translation of the discussions at the national level and ensure a richer exchange in the Forum itself. The involvement of the ILO and its constituents would also be highly useful.

It is critical to allow the active participation from all relevant stakeholders, including trade unions, for sharing best practice, research as well as for raising cases which might need attention by Parties.

Ideas for developing a work programme

An international discussion on just transition in the Forum and Work Programme under the Paris Agreement should help the following purposes:

*** Anticipation**

Collect practices and methodologies for assessing employment consequences of climate policies to support countries to take more socially-sound decision making based on best practice and lessons learnt in other countries

*** Planning**

Identify public policies that have been designed to counter negative impacts on jobs, or to multiply positive impacts as a means for helping other Parties in operationalizing a Just Transition domestically.

*** Assessment of financial needs**

Assess and identify the investments needed in order to support economic sector transformation, and the potential sources for funding them. The link between this assessment and the possibility for UNFCCC institutions to support the most vulnerable populations should be progressively done.

*** Dialogue mechanisms**

Collect good practices of multi-stakeholder approaches at the domestic level dealing with Just Transition, including those in which trade union representatives participate.

*** Bridge-building**

Build bridges with other relevant processes. In this particular case, related to employment and Just Transition, this will mean reinforcing the link between the UNFCCC and the International Labour Organisation, who adopted conclusions on Just Transition in 2013 and Tripartite Guidelines on this issue in 2015. Work undertaken in the ILO should also inform future UNFCCC work on Just Transition.

In the context of discussions under the Paris Agreement, the discussion could focus on

Best practices in bringing employment and JT aspects to NDCs and long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies

Best practice in using the ILO Just Transition guidelines for climate policies.

Conclusion

The ITUC considers it vital to identify aspects of Just Transition policies which can be enriched by international cooperation as a means to facilitate progress on critical areas of negotiation at the UNFCCC. In particular it needs to be recognised that if a just transition is operationalized, countries can address fears and build the support of their citizens for more ambitious climate action. Debates around the future of the work programme, as well as those in the ADP should serve this purpose.

The trade union movement stands ready to provide further explanations around the different proposals made in this submission.