

Submission on Climate Finance Work Programme – Journalists for Human Rights and CSOs from North Macedonia

On behalf of Journalists for Human Rights and civil society organizations (CSOs) based in North Macedonia, we welcome the opportunity to provide input to the climate finance work programme under Article 9 of the Paris Agreement.

We commend the intention to ensure an inclusive, participatory, and transparent process, and emphasize the importance of meaningfully integrating perspectives from smaller and climate-vulnerable countries, including those in Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans.

(a) Overall expectations and desired outputs/outcomes

We expect the climate finance work programme to:

- Enhance transparency, accountability, and accessibility of climate finance flows, particularly for developing countries and local stakeholders.
- Strengthen alignment between climate finance commitments and actual disbursements.
- Improve access to climate finance for local governments, CSOs, and community-based initiatives.

In the Western Balkans, climate finance remains limited, fragmented, and often inaccessible to local actors. For example:

- Municipalities in North Macedonia and neighboring countries often lack the technical capacity to access major international funds such as the Green Climate Fund.
- Adaptation projects—such as flood prevention in regions affected by recurring extreme weather—remain underfunded despite increasing climate risks.
- Civil society and investigative journalists face significant barriers in accessing reliable data on climate finance flows, limiting public oversight.

Concrete outputs should include:

- Clear guidelines for tracking and reporting climate finance, including standardized methodologies.
- Mechanisms to ensure equitable allocation of funds, particularly for adaptation and loss and damage.

- Practical tools and capacity-building frameworks to support local actors in accessing climate finance.
- Recommendations to improve public communication and information disclosure on climate finance.

(b) Thematic pillars and subtopics

We recommend the following thematic pillars:

1. Transparency and Accountability

- Standardized reporting frameworks
- Monitoring and verification of financial flows
- Public access to climate finance data

In Southeast Europe, limited transparency in how climate funds are allocated and spent—particularly in large infrastructure and energy transition projects—raises concerns about accountability and effectiveness.

2. Access and Equity

- Simplified procedures for accessing funds
- Support for least developed and small economies
- Gender-responsive and inclusive finance

Western Balkan countries, many of which are middle-income but highly vulnerable to climate impacts, often fall between eligibility categories and struggle to access adequate funding.

3. Local Engagement and Capacity Building

- Direct access for CSOs and local governments
- Capacity-building for project development and implementation
- Strengthening the role of independent media in climate finance oversight

For instance, local CSOs in North Macedonia and the region are actively engaged in environmental protection but lack direct funding channels and technical support to scale their impact.

4. Adaptation and Loss & Damage Financing

- Scaling up adaptation finance
- Dedicated mechanisms for loss and damage

- Addressing regional vulnerabilities, including in Southeast Europe

The region is increasingly affected by heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and floods, yet adaptation finance remains significantly lower than mitigation funding, leaving communities exposed.

5. Private Sector Engagement and Safeguards

- Leveraging private finance responsibly
- Ensuring safeguards against greenwashing
- Promoting responsible investment aligned with climate goals

In the Balkans, energy transition investments—particularly in hydropower and gas—have at times raised environmental and social concerns, underscoring the need for stronger safeguards.

(c) Organization of the work programme

To ensure inclusivity, balance, and technical robustness, the work programme should:

- Include structured participation of CSOs, independent media, and local stakeholders in all stages.
- Organize thematic workshops with regional representation, including underrepresented regions such as the Western Balkans.
- Ensure transparency by publishing all submissions, summaries, and draft outputs in accessible formats.
- Facilitate hybrid (online and in-person) consultations to broaden participation.
- Integrate feedback loops where stakeholders can review and comment on interim outputs.

Additionally, we stress the importance of recognizing the role of independent journalism in strengthening accountability and public understanding of climate finance. In contexts where public data is limited, journalists play a critical role in investigating and communicating how climate funds are used.

We remain available for further engagement and would welcome participation in upcoming consultations.