



International  
Labour  
Organization

# ► Trade unions and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

A guide for involvement



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## ► Foreword

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When the ILO's Programme and Budget for 2024-25 was adopted at the International Labour Conference in June 2023, the constituents endorsed the creation of a dedicated programme aiming at harnessing the full potential of EBMOs and workers' organizations and enable them to ensure the policy and institutional environment necessary for the pursuit of economic, social and sustainable development.

One of the objectives under this programme is to increase trade union capacity to provide coherent and integrated policy proposals for a just transition through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement.

Training programmes on the role and voice of trade unions in ensuring policy coherence at both the national and the international level related to just transition have been implemented, including on how to influence UNFCCC processes such as the conferences of the parties (COPs).

This Guide, which is one of the global deliverables under this programme, aims at supporting trade unions in influencing the NDCs. It has been drafted by Claire La Hovary (ACTRAV), with the support of Lene Olsen (ACTRAV), and has benefited from comments by Bert De Wel (ITUC).

We hope it will contribute to the commitment to negotiate and implement a just transition towards environmental sustainable economies and societies for all.

**Maria Helena André**

Director

Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)  
International Labour Organization, Geneva

## ► Preface

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The ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ILO-ACTRAV) has, through a dedicated programme, supported the effective participation of trade unions in climate change debates to promote and implement a just transition for workers through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The NDCs are national commitments to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change, submitted by Parties to the Paris Climate Agreement every five years. This Guide, which has been developed in cooperation with workers' organizations, is part of this dedicated programme.

In December 2024, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres revealed that "[t]he top ten hottest years on record have happened in the last 10 years, including 2024. This is climate breakdown - in real time. We must exit this road to ruin - and we have no time to lose. In 2025, countries must put the world on a safer path by dramatically slashing emissions and supporting the transition to a renewable future" (UNSG 2024).

Meanwhile the International Labour Conference (ILC) has stated that "[f]ailure to address environmental and climate change will threaten human well-being and all life on Earth, progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and will exacerbate gender and other forms of inequalities and exclusion." This statement, made during the discussions which led to the [Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#), adopted by the ILC in June 2023, also highlighted that "transitions need concerted efforts and must be planned and structured in a way that addresses employment losses, decent work deficits, inequality and sectoral and educational misalignments. Policies have to be coherent and balanced and must address the nexus between climate change, decent work and sustainable development" (ILC, 2023).

### Key points of ILO-ACTRAV's work on NDCs

- Developing a workers' guide on the Paris Climate Agreement, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Conference of the Parties (COPs) - including case studies on national workers' organizations participation.
  - Elaborating and implementing innovative training programmes in cooperation with the ILO's International Training Centre in Turin (ITC-ILO) to build the capacity of trade unions in ensuring policy coherence at the national and the international level related to just transition. The training programmes focus on workers' priorities in the ILC Conclusions such as industrial policies and technological change and upgrading
  - Capacity building on how to influence the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) processes, particularly the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) adopted at COP28, and support in the development of trade union policy proposals for COP29 and COP30 where dialogues on the JTWP will take place.
  - Providing policy advice on the formulation of economic, social and environmental policies to be addressed in NDCs, in particular relating to the nine policy areas in the ILO Guidelines for a just transition. A particular focus on women and youth will be part of this work.
  - Documenting workers' organizations' experiences and making recommendations based on their work on NDCs.
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## ► 1. Introduction

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### 1.1 Background

The [ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#), 2015 (hereinafter the ILO Guidelines) are a tool to support a just transition when addressing the direct and indirect impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on workers and the labour market. The Guidelines make the case for a just transition through securing the livelihoods, income and jobs of those negatively affected by the green transition. The ILO Guidelines provide a definition of just transition as a process “towards an environmentally sustainable economy” which “needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty” (ILO, 2015, para. 4).

The ILO Guidelines provide non-binding practical orientation to ILO constituents on how to formulate, implement and monitor the policy framework to address climate change and ensure that environmental challenges and the accompanying economic and social challenges are addressed. In addition, they highlight the need for adequate, informed and ongoing consultation with all other relevant stakeholders (ILO 2015, para. 13(a)). The participation of governments, workers’ and employer’s organizations, should take place through social dialogue – this is a precondition for a just transition.

The [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#)<sup>1</sup>, an international treaty adopted in 2015, a few months after the ILO Guidelines makes specific reference to “a just transition for the workforce” in its preamble, and thus points directly toward the necessity of consulting social partners and taking labour issues into account as part of the green agenda.

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► *Taking note of 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.*

► PARIS AGREEMENT, preamble

Just transition also features in an international labour standard (ILS) adopted within the ILO in 2017. [Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience](#) not only deals, inter alia, with disasters resulting from climate change but it calls for just transitions in the response and recovery measures it advocates for. It also specifies that all response measures need to be taken through social dialogue.


► ***All of this, in addition to the reference to the importance of the engagements of all levels of government and various actors in addressing climate change, paves the way for the involvement of trade unions in developing and implementing national climate policies.***

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<sup>1</sup> The Paris Agreement aims at implementing the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), adopted in 1992 (195 state parties, out of 198 parties to the Convention, are parties to the Paris Agreement). Iran, Libya, and Yemen have not ratified the Paris Agreement to date.

The ILO Guidelines were bolstered by the International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2023 when it adopted the [Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#) (hereinafter the Resolution).

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 *The International Labour Conference endorsed the ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (2015) which provides the central reference for policymaking and a basis for action.*

► ILC, 2023

The Resolution highlights that Governments, in consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations should:

- a. formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate gender responsive, inclusive, integrated and coherent just transition frameworks that are coordinated with relevant economic, social and environmental policies.
  - b. integrate measures into environmental and climate policies *such as nationally determined contributions* to the Paris Agreement and net-zero targets, and into coherent, integrated and comprehensive employment, social protection and industrial policies to advance a just transition (emphasis added).
- ***The aim of this publication is to assist workers' organizations in either maintaining their involvement in NDCs, stepping it up, or simply getting involved in NDCs – from their development to their implementation and monitoring.***

## 1.2 Just transition and workers' organizations

The impacts of climate and environmental change risk undermine decades of poverty reduction and progress towards all other Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is also undermining the work of the ILO. The ILO has noted that climate change is, for example, "having a large and growing impact on the world of work, with important implications for the advancement of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work [FPRW]", to the extent that "an increasing number of FPRW violations can be traced directly or indirectly to the impacts of climate change" (ILO, 2024, paras 16 - 18).

Unless climate change is urgently addressed through a just transition, inequalities will continue to grow and those already marginalized socially, economically, culturally, politically and institutionally will face increased risks. Just transition must contribute to poverty reduction and human development, including through a commitment to decent work. Central to this is the transition from informal to formal employment, the prevention of informalization, skills development, social protection and living wages. All actors in the world of work must come

together to step up the development and implementation of just transition policies, through tripartite social dialogue with representatives of Governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and through wider stakeholder consultations.

The broader context for social dialogue to be effective may be problematic however, as:

- ▶ Progress toward the realisation of FPRW has stalled and in some cases regressed.
- ▶ Major implementation gaps have persisted, and in many instances, widened.
- ▶ Despite their critical role in the realization of the other labour rights, freedom of association and collective bargaining rights remain significantly challenged across the world.

Access to freedom of association and collective bargaining is essential for social dialogue to take place and is a precondition for full and successful engagement in NDCs. Engaging in social dialogue on just transition could be an entry point for workers' organizations that might be excluded from social dialogue on other topics.

If trade unions wish to have their concerns heard, they need to develop policy positions with regard to climate change. In particular, they can ensure that current and future members, particularly youth, are better positioned to meet the world-of-work challenges related to climate change.

The following ILO policy briefs can guide discussions and support trade unions in developing their priorities for a just transition:

1. [Occupational safety and health in a just transition](#)
2. [The role of active labour market policies for a just transition](#)
3. [Social protection for a just transition](#)
4. [A just transition for people living with HIV in the world of work](#)
5. [Greening macroeconomic policies: Current trends and policy options](#)
6. ["Nothing about us without us" - Realizing disability rights through a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies](#)
7. [Skills Development for a Just Transition](#)
8. [Indigenous Peoples and a Just Transition for All](#)
9. [Human mobility and labour migration related to climate change in a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#)
10. [Green works to support a just transition](#)
11. [Gender equality, labour and a just transition for all](#)
12. [Sectoral Policies for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All](#)
13. [How MSMEs can contribute to and benefit from a just transition](#)
14. [The Role of Social Dialogue and Tripartism in a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All](#)

Climate change will have huge impacts on workplaces and jobs – in all countries, in all sectors, and in all enterprises. The energy sector is one example as the transition from carbon intensive energy sources to renewable energy is high on the agenda. Agriculture and construction

are other sectors impacted most directly due to the nature of work often being carried out outdoors. Trade unions should ensure that the following questions are addressed when climate policies are developed and implemented.

- Who is losing their jobs?
- Are there new quality jobs being created?
- Are workers equipped to get new jobs in the renewable energy sector?
- What are the reskilling plans for those workers?
- How is gender equality and non-discrimination being addressed?
- What plans and measures are being put in place for workers near retirement?
- Is there access to social protection for those falling behind?
- Do industrial policies look at development of new jobs in communities where jobs have been lost?
- Are young workers entering the labour market ready for new jobs in the green energy sector?
- What are working conditions in these new jobs?
- Are workers in these new jobs unionized?
- ***Looking into these questions and clarifying a policy is a crucial step to help workers' organization be better equipped to participate in debates and influence NDCs.***

## ► 2. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

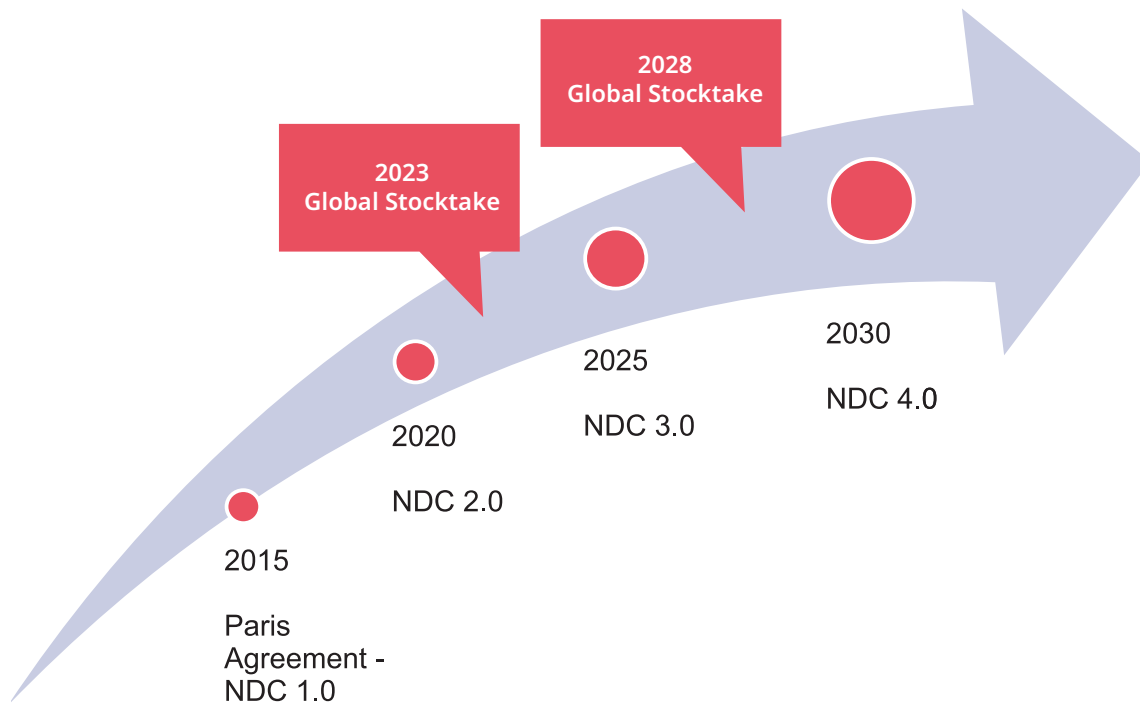
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### 2.1 What are NDCs and when are they due?

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are countries' self-defined national climate pledges under the Paris Agreement. They detail what countries plan to do to limit the increase in the global average temperature to 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. They outline how countries will adapt to climate impacts and ensure sufficient finance to support these efforts. The Paris Agreement requires each signatory country to prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs that it intends to achieve. Countries therefore need to pursue domestic mitigation measures to enact these pledges.

[What are Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\) under the international climate change process?](#)

NDCs are submitted every five years to the UNFCCC secretariat and reflect the countries' highest possible ambition. Each new NDC is supposed to present progressively more ambitious targets (Paris Agreement, Article 4, paragraph 11).



Since 2015, State Parties to the Paris Agreement have been requested to submit new or updated NDCs every five years, namely by 2020, 2025, 2030, and so on, so forth, regardless of the timelines of national policy frameworks. However, these deadlines are not necessarily respected, and trade unions ought to verify when their country's next NDC will be submitted. Importantly, Parties may at any time adjust their existing NDCs to enhance their level of ambition.

The process of developing and updating the NDCs varies from country to country. It is typically under the leadership of a government agency which gathers inputs from other agencies and may hold consultations with stakeholders.

- ***The process of developing and updating the NDC may involve carrying out stocktakes on the implementation of current NDCs, conducting assessments and diagnostics, holding workshops, and gathering views and feedback from various stakeholders, offering many entry points for workers' organizations.***

## 2.2 Current NDCs

To get a sense of what each country's goals are, how trade unions' concerns have been integrated, and where improvements can be made, it is useful to have a look at the NDC's database.

### Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) Registry and Report

All NDCs are recorded in a public registry maintained by the UNFCCC secretariat:

[Nationally Determined Contributions Registry | UNFCCC](#)

- ***Trade unions can access all NDCs through this registry and use them as a source of inspiration.***

Additionally, every year, the UNFCCC secretariat produces a synthesis report of NDCs. The 2024 report presents information from the 168 NDCs communicated before 9 September 2024. This is comprised of 153 new or updated NDCs and 15 that remained unchanged.

[Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. Synthesis report by the secretariat | UNFCCC](#)

- ***Trade unions can have a general sense as to how social issues are dealt with in all NDCs.***

In its report for 2024, the UNFCCC reported unequal impacts of response measures on different groups, with impacts on the workforce being the most frequently mentioned. 34 per cent of Parties plan to address these differentiated social and economic impacts by including the concept of just transition in NDC implementation. Measures include a just transition mechanism; just transition funds; and establishment of a committee to oversee the just transition process. In addition, the report illustrated that countries were introducing laws and strategies for protecting workers; mechanisms and strategies for job creation, skills development and employment policies; and a consultation process through social dialogue (UNFCCC, 2024, [para. 119](#)).

### The COP, the CMP, and the CMA

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement established three governing bodies to oversee progress toward the green economy: the conference of the Parties for the Convention (COP), the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP), and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA).

These conferences rotate annually among the five United Nations regional groups, and take place at the same time; therefore COP 29, CMP 19 and CMA 6 took place in Baku in 2024. They have grown exponentially over the past two decades to become among the largest international meetings in the world. The negotiations are increasingly complex, involving an increasing number of officials from governments all over the world, at all levels, as well as representatives from the social partners, civil society, business, international organizations, and the news media.

A key task of the COP is to review the national communications and emission inventories submitted by Parties. Based on this information, the COP assesses the effects of the measures taken by Parties and the progress made in achieving the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC. A COP may offer a platform to discuss NDCs and announce country targets.

Both the ILO and the international trade union movement are present at COPs. Since 2022, the ILO in cooperation with the European Commission, the UNFCCC, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Organization of Employers (IOE) have hosted a 'Just Transition Pavilion' for delegates to engage in formal and informal consultations, to convene thematic events, and network. The objective is to keep the world-of-work dimension of climate change at the forefront of discussions. At COP29 the Pavilion included an NDC Clinic for constituents to learn more about how just transition can be further integrated into the next edition of their NDCs

See [What are United Nations Climate Change Conferences? | UNFCCC](#)

See [ILO at COP29: Events from the Just Transition Pavilion](#)

## 2.3 Global Stocktake

In 2023 governments took stock of the implementation of the Paris Agreement and assessed the collective progress towards achieving its long-term goals. This stocktake will be repeated in 2028, and every five years thereafter. The outcome of the global stocktake informs, and will continue to inform the preparation of NDCs, in order to allow for increased ambition and climate action.

More information on this exercise is available [here](#).

The first global stocktake was concluded at COP28 in December 2023 in Dubai and [led to the following insights](#):

- The implementation of the Paris Agreement is lacking across all areas. Global emissions are not consistent with limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5°C, while adaptation to climate change is not at the levels needed.
- There is need for a systemic transformation, namely a whole-society and whole-economy approach that mainstreams and aligns climate resilience and development with low greenhouse gas emissions. Such efforts must be maintained over decades, supporting sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.
- There is a growing gap between the needs of developing countries and the support provided and mobilized for them trillions of dollars need to be committed to climate action and climate-resilient development.

This needs to be better addressed in future NDCs.

- ***The next stocktake is planned for 2028 and trade unions should ensure that they participate.***

By evaluating where the world stands when it comes to meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement, the stocktake can help policymakers and stakeholders strengthen their climate policies and commitments in their next round of NDCs, paving the way for accelerated action (see: [Frequently Asked Questions About the Global Stocktake | UNFCCC](#)). The ITUC participated in the 2023 stocktake by submitting comments. These are available [here](#). The ILO also submitted comments [here](#).

- ***Trade unions should take part in this stocktake, voice their concerns and defend workers' perspectives.***

On 14 March 2024, the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat sent out a special message to Parties and observer states on the third generation of national climate plans (UN, 2024). There is an urgent need for more ambitious goals and more participation. As the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has stated in its 2024 flagship Emissions Gap report (UNEP, 2024), “ambition means nothing without action”. Unless global emissions in 2030 are brought below levels implied by existing policies and current NDCs, it will become impossible to get on a pathway that limits global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot. It is therefore crucial that the next NDCs delivers “a quantum leap” in terms of ambition and action.



### **Call to Action: fostering social dialogue for a just transition to a resilient low-carbon economy**

This [Call to Action](#), signed at the 2024 Hamburg Sustainability Conference, emphasizes the need for collaborative global efforts to ensure a socially just transition to a low-carbon, resilient economy that promotes sustainable growth, decent work, and social inclusion, aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 13. It is a powerful appeal to step up joint action to a sustainable future, fostering innovative solutions and promoting social dialogue.

#### **Why a Call to Action?**

The primary goal is to encourage international cooperation and strengthen social dialogue among governments, workers, and employers. This initiative aims to maximize ecological, economic and social benefits while minimizing job loss and inequality risks associated with the green transition.

#### **Priorities:**

- ▶ Alliance Building: Encourage partnerships across social groups to address challenges and share knowledge on just transition efforts.
- ▶ Social Dialogue: Promote inclusive dialogue as a tool for economic resilience, decent work, and social cohesion.
- ▶ Representation and Capacity Building: Strengthen the role of workers' and employers' organizations in shaping policies and improving workforce skills for future green jobs.

This initiative encourages participation from international organizations, governments, and social partners. To express your endorsement for this Call to Action, find more information and sign the support letter [here](#).

## **▶ 3. How should just transition and social dialogue be reflected in NDCs?**

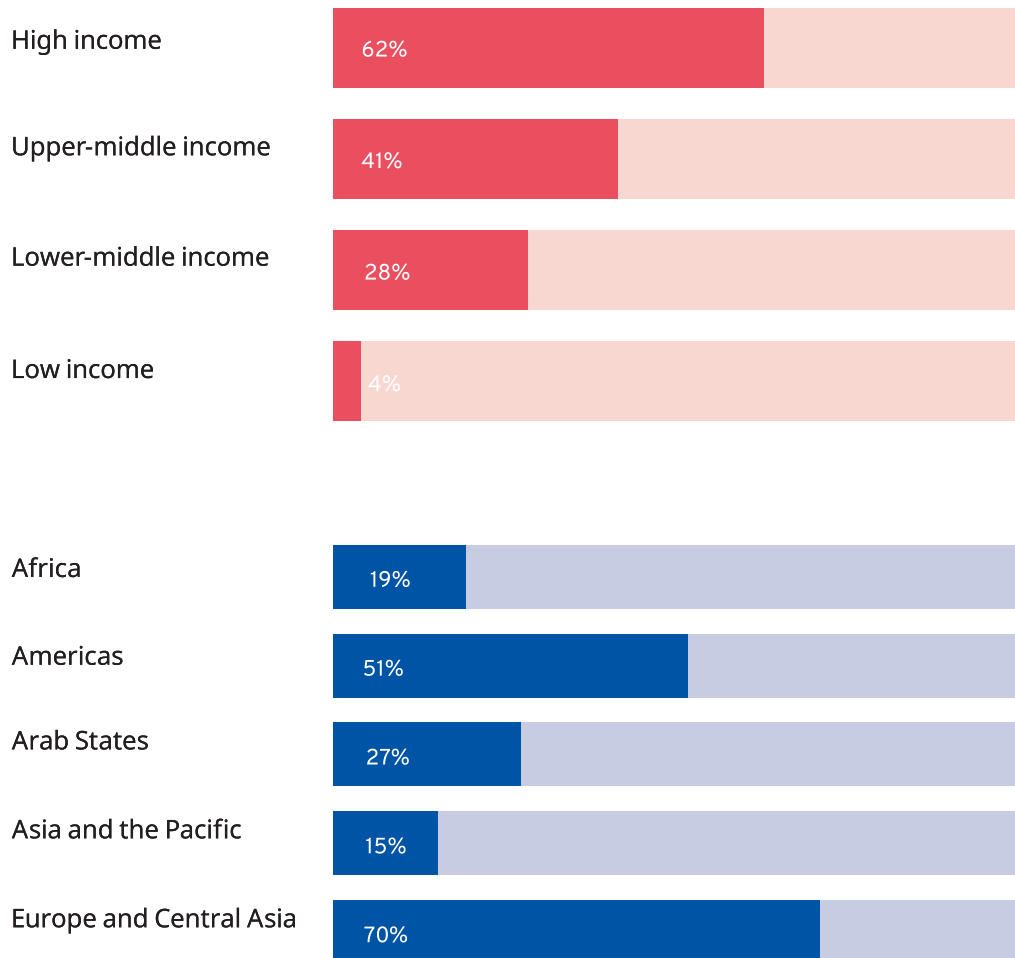
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### **3.1 Just transition included in NDCs**

The references to just transition in the Paris Agreement is important. According to a mapping by the ILO - 72 out of 193 countries (39 per cent) include explicit references to just transition in their NDCs.

However, the uptake of the term in NDCs varies both across regions and country income groups. The proportion of NDCs with explicit references is higher in Europe and Central Asia (70 per cent), the Americas (51 per cent), and in the Arab States (27 per cent), and lower in countries in Africa (19 per cent) and in Asia and the Pacific (15 per cent). With regards to income groups, 62 per cent of high-income countries explicitly reference just transition (ILO, 2024a).

### NDCs with explicit references to just transition by country income level and region (percentage)



Source: ILO, [Mapping Just Transition in NDCs- An overview FINAL PUBLISHED.pdf](#), p. 7.

The ILO strives to have the concept of just transition included in NDCs. If a country has not included references to just transition in their NDCs, it would be a significant result to have the revised NDC include reference to just transition. If a country already mentions just transition in its NDCs, it is important that just transition is also present in the revised NDCs. In terms of the way just transition is addressed, it is important that:

- Just transition is mentioned beyond one sentence and with additional text explaining the country approach.
- Just transition is considered a cross-cutting concern, thus relevant to mitigation and adaptation.
- Social dialogue and consultations with workers' and employers' organizations are mentioned as part of determining NDCs.
- The NDC considers both positive and negative employment and social impacts of climate actions and pays attention to gender and non-discrimination and to vulnerable populations.

- ▶ Just transition is not only mentioned in relation to the energy sector, but also in relation to other sectors, or as a cross-cutting issue.
- ▶ Decent work is mentioned, or, if not mentioned explicitly, other references that capture the qualitative dimension of employment are included such as decent jobs, good jobs, or quality jobs.
- ▶ Just transition references include concrete actions and measures such as the development and implementation of a just transition strategy, local or sectoral just transition plans or skills training programmes; or reference is made to mainstreaming just transition considerations in different policies programmes, or projects on just transition that will be developed.
- ▶ The NDC acknowledges that just transition has financial implications.
- ▶ Different world-of-work policy areas such as skills, social protection, enterprise development employment and active labour market policies, social dialogue, and workers' rights are included.

Even if the words “just transitions” do not appear in the NDC, it is important that the **concept it refers to is**, and that this concept is **developed further** in the document. For example, for various reasons, the term ‘just transition’ may not be used – instead, the NDC might refer to formulations such as ‘fair transition’, ‘equitable transition’ or ‘green jobs.’ In such cases, it is important to ensure that the above-listed considerations are addressed. For example, the NDC may not mention just transition but may refer to ‘sustainable jobs’ while monitoring employment and social impacts, skills and social protection.

- ▶ ***It is important that trade unions support including just transitions considerations in a comprehensive manner rather than focusing only on one single specific policy area. It is also beneficial when inputs for a comprehensive reference on just transition are complemented with thematic that go into greater depth in different policy areas.***

## 3.2 Social dialogue as an integral part of just transition

A key aspect of just transition is social dialogue. It is important to have references to social dialogue and consultations with workers' and employers' organizations in the text of the revised NDC itself to document and formalize the role of consultations with social partners. Such references may appear for example in the sections on governance and consultations that are in many NDCs.

However, mentioning social dialogue is not enough: consultations with the social partners need to take place when drafting the NDCs. As noted by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in its 2021 report on [Exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association as essential to advancing climate justice](#), “workers and unions have routinely been excluded from climate policy discussions and from, for example, providing meaningful input into discussions on Governments’ nationally determined contributions” (2021, para 40).

Despite domestic stakeholder consultations taking place, social dialogue is still lagging. According to the UNFCCC secretariat's [October 2024 synthesis report](#), 79 per cent of Parties did have formal arrangements in place for domestic stakeholder consultation, and 93 per cent indicated that they conducted consultations and engagement. However, it is important to differentiate between social dialogue with ILO social partners and stakeholder consultation per se.

► ***Beware of the difference between social dialogue and stakeholder consultations.***

**Social dialogue** is a structured, tripartite process between workers, employers, and governments to address labour-related issues. **Stakeholder consultation** is a broader process that engages various groups, including communities, NGOs, businesses, and other societal actors, to provide input on policies or projects that extend beyond labour-specific concerns. These terms are sometimes mistakenly used interchangeably, which can blur the focus on workers' rights in social dialogue and the inclusivity of broader consultation processes.

It is important to ensure that social dialogue takes place precisely because “impacts on the workforce” have been frequently mentioned in NDCs. 34 per cent of Parties plan to address social and economic impacts by including the concept of just transition in their overall NDC implementation, such as a just transition mechanism, just transition funds and establishment of a committee to oversee the just transition process. This includes laws and strategies for protecting workers; mechanisms and strategies for job creation, skills development and employment policies; and a consultation process and social dialogue (UNFCCC, 2024, para 119).

### 3.2.1 Examples of NDCs that include the concept of just transition

**Just transition and social dialogue in Brazil's NDC (2025):** [Brazil's 2025 NDC](#) has a dedicated section on “Just Transitions and Climate Justice” but also mainstreams just transition under mitigation, adaptation, and financing. With regard to social dialogue, the NDC stress that “climate policies and commitments are designed and implemented to contribute to the promotion of sustainable development and the fight against hunger, poverty and inequalities, within and between countries, strongly based on Climate Justice, just transitions and meaningful and effective social dialogue and the participation of all stakeholders (paragraphs 6, 9, 10). The National Climate Plan's mitigation and adaptation strategies are guided by broad social participation in their formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They include partnerships among federal, state, and municipal governments, the private sector, academia, social movements, and civil society to develop and implement climate change mitigation actions and to monitor and evaluate their implementation. To this end, monitoring and transparency mechanisms have been developed to enable independent agents to continuously assess the effectiveness and impact of policy measures.”

**Just transition and social dialogue in Canada's NDC (2025):** In its [2025 NDC](#), Canada refers to supporting workers and communities. It mentions the [Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act \(2024\)](#), that aims to support the creation of sustainable jobs, industries and communities, and helping the workforce gain the necessary skills, training, and tools to fill new job opportunities. A just and inclusive transition to sustainable jobs is an opportunity to advance equity, inclusion, and justice, by embedding these principles in policies, programs, frameworks and pathways to 2030 and beyond. The move to a low-carbon economy also represents an opportunity to

address existing inequalities in the workplace, and to enhance and improve training supports for those facing barriers in the workforce, such as Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, skilled newcomers, youth, women, LGBT+ people and persons with disabilities. The Sustainable Jobs Act will foster the creation of sustainable jobs, support industries and communities in every region across Canada, and help the workforce gain the necessary skills, training, and tools to fill these new job opportunities” (Government of Canada, 2025 Section 6(b)).

“Sustainable job means any job that is compatible with Canada’s pathway to achieving a net-zero-emissions and climate-resilient future and that reflects the concept of decent work, namely work — including a job in which the worker is represented by a trade union that has entered into a collective agreement — that can support the worker and their family over time and that includes elements such as fair income, job security, social protection and social dialogue” ([Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act, 2024](#), Article 2).

**Just transitions in South Africa’s NDC (2021):** In [its NDC](#), South Africa states from the outset that “a just transition is core to shifting our development pathway to increased sustainability, fostering climate resilient and low greenhouse gas emissions development, while providing a better life for all”. It goes on to establish what is needed for workers: “as part of ensuring a just transition we will need to put measures in place that plan for workforce reskilling and job absorption, social protection and livelihood creation, incentivising new green sectors of our economy, diversifying coal dependent regional economies, and developing labour and social plans as and when ageing coal-fired power plants and associated coal production infrastructure are decommissioned” (Government of South Africa, NDC 2021, p.5). It also clearly states that shifting away from coal and greening transport will be accompanied by “just transitions programmes to ensure that the costs of these measures to workers and communities are minimised and the benefits maximized” (Government of South Africa, NDC 2021, pp.28-29). The concept of a just transition is fully developed and an integral part of South Africa’s NDC.

## ► 4. NDCs and the role of trade unions

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### 4.1 The importance of trade unions’ involvement in NDCs

The global trade union movement has been advocating for the concept of just transition in the international policy agenda for decades. Trade unions need to be part of efforts to limit global warming to add a worker’s perspective to climate change. Transitions will not happen without workers and transitions need to be just.

► ***Just transition is a crucial area for workers’ organizations to develop expertise. It concerns young people, their future, and it is a way for trade unions to keep being relevant to younger membership.***

A concrete way is to make workers organizations’ voice heard through NDCs, in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

### All About the NDCs | United Nations

Climate action is a task for all of us. That is why we must [speak up](#) and hold our government leaders accountable for taking the bold climate action necessary to meet the urgency of this crisis. Remind them of their responsibility to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement by submitting ambitious NDCs in 2025. For more ideas on how to make your actions and your voice count, visit the [UN's ActNow campaign](#)

Of course, trade unions should get involved because of their specific role with regard to labour issues and because of the specific inclusion of this role with regard to climate change in the concept of just transition. Trade unions should be at the table when NDCs are discussed and when the NDCs are implemented, evaluated and revised to ensure that climate actions take impact on workers into account. NDCs ought to promote workers' rights and decent work. NDC negotiations touch upon a variety of topics that directly impact upon workers, ranging from industrial policies, technological change, social protection and skills development. Consequently, trade union participation should be comprehensive, through design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- ***Trade unions can make their voice heard in NDCs that are submitted every 5 years, or in NDCs revisions or updates. They can also prepare, monitor, and evaluate NDCs.***

## 4.2 Preparing NDCs

It is important to inform the policy process with rigorous analysis. The ILO undertakes frequent country assessments of the employment and social impacts of climate change such as those undertaken using the ILO Green Jobs Assessment Model (GJAM), which could assist workers' organizations to make specific demands. If a GJAM is not available, the ILO could conduct a Rapid Situational Analysis (RSA) for a Just Transition in NDCs. The RSA is a short and structured desk review that helps to identify possible elements for the integration of just transition.

- ***Trade unions could ask if such assessments have been conducted in their countries.***

Thematic diagnostics on specific thematic areas might have been conducted by the ILO that could help further elaborate specific policy areas in the NDC and possible follow up and complementary policy instruments. Some examples of thematic diagnostics concern:

- Green employment diagnostics.
- Skills anticipation and analyses.
- Social protection and climate change diagnostics.

Trade unions should ensure that specific areas are addressed in NDCs. The ITUC has developed guidance on what NDCs should emphasise, from a trade union perspective:

- ✓ **Freedom of association:** Protecting the right of workers to form or join unions to protect their rights as workers.
- ✓ **The right to collective bargaining:** Ensuring workers can negotiate wages, benefits, and working conditions collectively.
- ✓ **Social dialogue:** Promoting negotiations, consultation, and exchange of information between employers, workers, and governments to address economic and workplace issues.
- ✓ **Social Protection:** Guarantee access to social protection including unemployment benefits, healthcare, and pensions to mitigate economic risks throughout the lifecycle.
- ✓ **Decent Work:** Advocating for formal, quality jobs that provide dignity, equality, and ensure workers' health and safety.
- ✓ **Skills Development:** Ensuring workers have access to training and lifelong learning opportunities to adapt to just transition.
- ✓ **Meaningful Reporting:** Including the 'process' of just transition implementation such as social dialogue and degree of participation of social partners and other CSOs in NDC reporting (ITUC, 2025).

### 4.3 How can Trade Unions influence NDCs?

If your trade union has not been involved in NDCs before:

- ▶ Look at your country's NDC and identify whether there are any references to just transition, employment, decent work, or any issue relevant to the world of work.
- ▶ Read NDCs from other countries such as Brazil and South Africa to gain insight on how just transition could be integrated into NDCs.
- ▶ Reach out to the regional, sectoral and international trade union organizations of which you are a member to gain insights and support.
- ▶ Reach out to the ILO-ACTRAV to enquire about the process, particularly if the UN is involved in supporting work on NDC.
- ▶ Establish your demands and areas of concern and prepare questions and areas of discussion.
- ▶ Join forces with other workers' organizations in your country to develop a joint position, if possible.
- ▶ Reach out to employers' organizations to approach the government together, if possible.
- ▶ Approach the line ministry or institution in charge.

If your trade union has been involved in previous NDCs:

- ▶ Reflect on what has worked and what has not.
- ▶ Read NDCs from other countries such as Brazil, South Africa or Canada to gain some insight on how just transition could be integrated into NDCs.
- ▶ Establish how to influence subsequent NDCs by adding new topics, or implementation details.



- If you haven't done so already, reach out to employers' organizations.
- Establish a relationship with the ministry or institution overseeing the NDC process to ensure that you are included in the debates.
- Ensure an ongoing communication flow with other union organizations to exchange experiences.
- Ensure an ongoing communication flow with ILO-ACTRAV.
- ***Reaching out to the ILO: The ILO has a clear mandate on just transition, supported by the ILC Resolution of 2023, and it is in its advantage to fight for a space in the UN landscape, and therefore to help make a space for social partners to be heard and for their positions to be taken into account.***

The ILO has been supporting countries in integrating just transition in the past round of NDCs. Its areas of focus are:

- Diagnostics and assessments of employment and social impacts of climate measures.
- Capacity development on just transition of government institutions, workers' and employers' organizations.
- Facilitation of social dialogue to strengthen participation, gather inputs from real economy actors, and strengthen broad-based support.
- Technical assistance on NDC design with a focus on just transition.

As stated above, it is in the ILO's interest to include and strengthen the just transition elements in NDCs to ensure it is taken into account by the wider UN system. Workers' organizations may associate themselves to the ILO to reflect, with employers, what could be just transition elements to be included in new or revised NDCs. The ILO may assist social partners in advocating for a seat at the table and participating in consultations.

- ***Reaching out to employers: It can also be extremely beneficial to work with employers to approach governments together with regards to being heard and including just transition issues in NDCs.***

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Organization of Employers (IOE) jointly urge COP29 to develop and implement a global framework for a just transition, emphasizing the need for inclusive, sustainable, and job-rich economies. They stress the importance of social dialogue, skills development, and respect for Fundamental Labour Rights to avoid job losses and mitigate socioeconomic impacts. The statement highlights the necessity of coherent policies, targeted industrial strategies, and clear commitments in national frameworks to support workers and businesses in transitioning to a net-zero economy. Both organizations are ready to collaborate with governments to achieve these goals ([IOE-ITUC, 2024](#)).



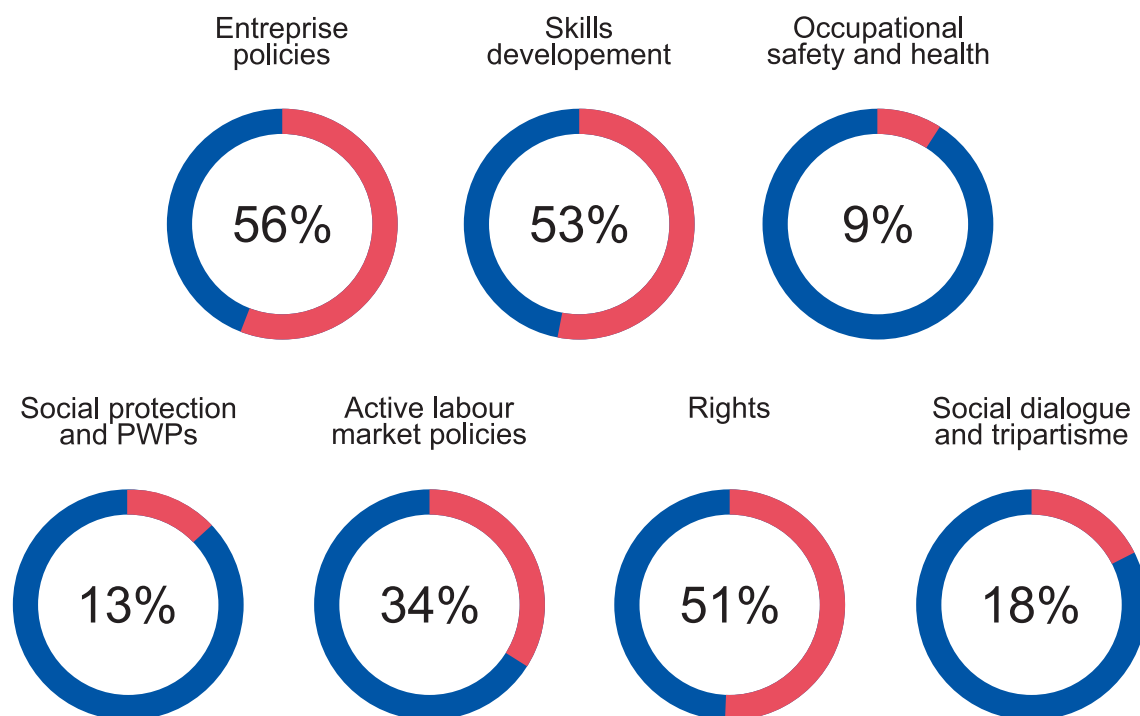
The NDC Partnership (NDCP) was formed to strengthen collaboration between developed and developing country governments, international institutions and NGOs in providing support for accelerated climate action, with a focus on NDCs. One of its key functions is to gather countries' requests for support on various aspects of their NDC revision and implementation and to match it with institutions and programmes that can meet those demands. As part of its technical support, the NDCP supports a 'facilitator' who works in the lead Ministry to facilitate coordination and support from international partners and interministerial collaboration on the NDC revision. It is useful to make contact with this facilitator. Please contact the ILO to help establish contact in case you are not in touch with them yet. The NDCP has developed a tool to help guide NDC revisions.

## ► 5. Entry-points for trade unions

### 5.1 Policy areas

The following policy areas have been mentioned in the most recent NDCs from 193 countries submitted before 12 July 2024, according to [ILO research](#). All are areas over which workers' organizations can have an influence.

► *They are all areas in which workers' organizations have a say and that they can influence.*



Source: ILO, [Mapping Just Transition in NDCs- An overview FINAL PUBLISHED.pdf](#), p. 16.

## 5.2 A few examples: the importance of skills, occupational safety and health, and social protection

### 5.2.1 The example of skills development

53 per cent of NDCs mention skills development, with agriculture being the sector most frequently addressed (ILO, 2024). Skills development is a crucial area for workers, as the greening of the economy requires a parallel greening of jobs which, in turn, requires consideration of the skills needed for these new jobs as well as the need to reskill and upskill workers who see their jobs disappear. This is a huge area of involvement for workers' organizations.

In order to have a say, workers' organizations need to take part in shaping skills development and lifelong learning (LLL). This is not an area where trade unions feel necessarily at ease but they may be involved in many types of activities at national, sectoral, and enterprise levels to support policy formulation and implementation, through contributing to national strategies, negotiating collective agreements and participating in regulatory and consultative bodies.

The ILO advocates for the involvement of social partners in the development of vocational guidance and training. The ways in which both employers' and workers' organizations can engage in formulating, applying and reviewing national human resources development, education training and LLL policies have been spelt out in Conventions No. 140, and Recommendations Nos 195, 205, and 208, among others. The ILO standards provide guidance on social partners' involvement in different areas, ranging from defining skills strategies at different levels; developing policies which are consistent with economic, fiscal and social policies; assuring inclusiveness and access for all; identifying skills' needs; recognizing and certifying skills; and assessing labour market needs.

#### The Maldives' third Nationally Determined Contributions (3.0.)

In a specific chapter on Climate Advocacy, Education and Empowerment the NDC make references to skills needed across all sectors. It says that "Raising awareness and fostering interest in climate-related career opportunities is essential for building a skilled workforce and driving sustainable growth in critical fields. Private sector involvement is equally crucial for advancing climate action. Strategic engagement with businesses, particularly in areas like renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure, is essential to meet climate targets." (Government of Maldives, 2024)

Source: [Maldives' Third Nationally Determined Contribution.pdf](#)

More information on greening skills can be found:

[ILO, Greening TVET and skills development - A practical guidance tool, 2022.](#)

### 5.2.2 The example of occupational safety and health

Only nine per cent of NDCs mention OSH. Yet, focussing on OSH policies and measures in NDCs is crucial to tackle safety and health risks for workers emanating from climate change. These include rising temperatures or new OSH issues in emerging green industries, or in industries using green technologies and inputs. OSH policy elements can include:

- ▶ adapting or developing new OSH standards for new work processes in green industries;
- ▶ making ongoing references to the promotion or enforcement of existing OSH standards;
- ▶ OSH training and awareness raising.

Ideally, there should be a specific section on OSH in NDCs focussing specifically on affected workers. The NDC could provide, for example, that employers should provide breaks during the hottest times of the day and year to outdoor workers to protect them from heat stress.

More information on for instance heat stress can be found here:

[Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate](#)

[Heat at work: Implications for safety and health](#),

### 5.2.3 The example of social protection

Social protection plays a central role in both preventing and addressing the adverse consequences of climate crisis. It is also crucial to enabling a just transition. Social security systems are there to prevent, protect and help people recover from shocks and transitions throughout their lives. If designed, adapted and funded appropriately, they will address risks induced by climate change and climate policies.

Strong social protection systems will, for example, provide compensation to workers whose jobs are disappearing. Social protection can also incentivise sustainable and green decisions and investments, income diversification and, importantly, provide workers with the resources and time to further develop skills and access new employment opportunities.

#### Kenya's updated Nationally Determined Contribution

Kenya has committed to enhancing its adaptation and ambitions by committing to bridging implementation gaps. In its list of adaptation measures, it specifically refers the need to develop safety nets for women, youth and other vulnerable groups (Government of Kenya, 2020).

Source: [Kenya's First NDC \(updated version\).pdf](#)

### 5.3 Finance for just transition

Advancing a just transition needs consistent financial flows. Yet significant challenges and gaps remain. Only one per cent of all NDCs refer specifically to the allocation of resources for a just transition. This is higher in high-income and upper-middle income countries where two per cent of NDCs allocate an explicit amount of resources to just transition. Regionally, three per cent of NDCs in Americas allocate resources allocated to just transition, while in Europe and Central Asia the figure is two per cent.

One of the ILO's key messages for COP29 was to urge Parties to promote financing for the social dimensions of climate action. For this, it is crucial to integrate just transition under the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG). This will facilitate support to countries in meeting their climate and developmental objectives, as well as working towards alignment of sustainable finance practices with just transition objectives (ILO 2024c).

Unfortunately, the expectations for the NCQG were not met. The aim was to progressively scale up climate finance from \$US100 billion to US\$1.3 trillion. However, the target of US\$300 billion per year by 2035 is significantly less than the estimated US\$6.3 to US\$6.7 trillion needed annually by 2030. Additionally, developed nations failed to commit to essential public finance, which is crucial for helping developing countries adapt to climate change without increasing their debt burden. This lack of commitment from developed countries is seen as highly irresponsible.

The ILO Guidelines call on governments, in consultation with social partners, to articulate long-term financing needs and establish sustainable funding mechanisms for the implementation of the just transition framework. This needs to be incorporated in the NDCs.

► ***Trade unions can insist that their government commits to financing the social dimensions of climate action.***

## ► 6. Conclusions and Key Recommendations

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### 6.1 Conclusions

Climate change will impact workplaces and jobs in all countries, in all sectors, and in all enterprises. Workers' organizations have the opportunity to take part in NDCs through the inclusion of the concept of just transition in the Paris Agreement. Just transition cannot exist without social dialogue – indeed, if governments are serious about their obligations under the Paris Agreement, they have to take worker's organizations' demands and concerns into account.

Despite the constraints on freedom of association, collective bargaining, and lack of social dialogue that many workers' organizations face at national level, discussions and consultations around NDCs can offer workers a platform of a different kind to communicate workers' views. NDCs' consultations also offer the possibility to team up with other civil society organizations campaigning on issues with the same root cause to those that workers' organizations are

concerned about. Indeed, the exploitation of human beings and the exploitation of nature very often go hand in hand.

Engaging in NDCs means that workers' organizations already have a clear idea of what they want and are ready to take part in discussions. This should follow considerations of what is needed, what is desired, and what is achievable in the specific country context. This guide mentions various ways to enter in NDCs' consultations, and various entry points to start discussions. Many of these entry points are detailed in the ILO Guidelines towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.

Finally, being involved in NDCs is not a one-off task. It requires constant interest from trade unions in terms of follow-up, implementation, fine-tuning of the approach of trade unions, and engaging in eventual revisions of NDCs that may be submitted in-between cycles.

## 6.2 Recommendations

Some of the elements below could inform trade unions' actions when they decide to get involved in NDCs:

- ▶ The references to consultation and engagement in the Paris Agreement provide an opening to the involvement of trade unions in developing and implementing national climate policies.
- ▶ Developing a specific climate policy is a crucial step to help workers' organization be better equipped to participate in debates and influence NDCs. This should be comprehensive and cover all impacts on the world of work.
- ▶ Trade unions can access all NDCs through the UNCCC registry and use them as a source of inspiration (what to do and what not to do).
- ▶ Trade unions should ensure that they participate in the 2028 Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement.
- ▶ Trade unions must be mindful of the difference between social dialogue and stakeholder consultations, and advocate explicitly for social dialogue.
- ▶ Trade unions should work with employers, if possible, to approach governments together with regards to including just transition in NDCs.
- ▶ Just transition concerns young people, their future, and it is a way for trade unions to keep being relevant to younger membership.
- ▶ Trade unions can make their voice heard in NDCs that are submitted every 5 years, or in NDCs revisions or updates. They can also prepare, monitor, evaluate NDCs.
- ▶ Trade unions should seek support from ILO-ACTRAV. The ILO has a clear mandate on just transition, supported by the 2015 Guidelines and the ILC Resolution of 2023, and it is in its advantage to fight for a space in the UN landscape, and therefore to help make a space for social partners to be heard and for their positions to be taken into account.

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