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Recommendations for the Just Transition Mechanism

Ben Te, Gab Mesina, Dinah Faye Balleco and Jayvy R. Gamboa

Klima Center, Manila Observatory

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Submitting Organization: Manila Observatory (<https://www.observatory.ph/>)

Organization Address: Ateneo de Manila University Campus, Katipunan Avenue, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines 1108

Organization Profile: The Manila Observatory ("MO") is a research institution that does science to empower communities to take up the urgent challenges of sustainable development and disaster risk resilience.

Klima of the MO is a climate justice center advocating for science-based and gender-sensitive action and providing direct assistance to Indigenous peoples and local communities, vulnerable sectors, environmental and human rights defenders, youth activists and local governments.

Corresponding Author: Jayvy R. Gamboa
Assistant Director for Policy and Governance
jgamboa@observatory.ph

BACKGROUND

The decision to develop a Just Transition Mechanism (“JTM”)¹ highlights the growing recognition that climate action, specifically the reduction of GHG emissions, must provide robust social protections and safeguards in an ambitious, expedient, and equitable manner. What must be emphasized in the JTM is that social justice must be at the heart of climate action.² In principle, the transition towards a low-carbon economy must be done in accordance with established rights-based frameworks that protect livelihoods and ecosystems, reduce inequalities, and acknowledge community welfare and indigenous sovereignty. To this end, the JTM is expected to provide meaningful guidance and support to enable equitable transitions at all levels of governance.

It is through this lens that the following recommendations are made:

1. The JTM must be an enabler of domestic just transition pathways;
2. The JTM may be guided by the best available science, and Traditional, Indigenous, and Local Knowledge Systems (“TILKS”); and
3. The JTM must be a mechanism *of* and *with* non-Party Stakeholders.

1. JTM AS AN ENABLER OF DOMESTIC JUST TRANSITION

The JTM should provide structured access to support to all Parties for comprehensive domestic transition planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Accordingly, enhanced support must be provided to developing country Parties for crafting and implementing their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), long-term low-emission development strategies (LT-LEDS), and national adaptation plans (NAPs), all of which must consider and integrate just transition principles.³ Clear guidance on embedding just transition into domestic legal and policy frameworks is also essential.⁴

Moreover, the JTM should act as a coordinating platform that connects developing country Parties with financial resources, development banks, climate funds, and relevant UN agencies. Without adequate support for developing country Parties, just transition principles cannot be expected to be translated into reality. Support must be varied, from technical or financial assistance to capacity building, so that distinct needs can be catered

¹ Decision FCCC/PA/CMA/2025/L.14.

² La Viña, A.G., & Gamboa, J.R. (2022). Which *Social Justice*? Situating the Philippine Legal Concept of Social Justice Within Just Transition Research Collaborative’s Analytical Framework. *Journal of Global South Studies* 39(2), 402–430. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/gss.2022.0029>.

³ *Supra* note 1 at para. 15 and 20.

⁴ *See Id* at para. 19.

while efficiently managing available resources.

Another core function of the JTM should be facilitating the sharing of best practices among Parties. This can be achieved through knowledge platforms, technical dialogues, regional exchanges, and case-study repositories. By highlighting diverse experiences, the JTM can foster mutual learning without imposing uniform models. Recognition of distinctions across national circumstances and social contexts is essential.⁵ Pathways will differ depending on development needs, economic structures, historical responsibilities, and cultural realities. The mechanism should therefore promote nationally defined approaches while encouraging solidarity and international cooperation.

Transitioning towards a low-carbon economy at a global scale can only be done if the foundations for just transition are built across all levels, from national, sub-national, down to the local level. A swift and wide scale systems transformation cannot be realistically expected to materialize internationally, if domestic transition efforts are sidelined. Doing so requires the appropriate support system for local and national governments, regional authorities, and even community-level institutions. This also allows technical assistance to be provided in a cross-cutting, inclusive, and context-specific manner.

Assistance in this sense, should not be framed as one-way aid towards developing country Partners and its communities. Rather, assistance merely *facilitates* and *enables* domestic transition through providing technical or material resources to support planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation efforts. In this way, national, sub-national, local governments, and grassroots communities are empowered to lead, manage, and own their respective transition pathways. This paves the way for stakeholders to be direct participants in, rather than mere beneficiaries of, just energy transition.

2. SCIENCE AND TILKS AS GUIDES TO JUST TRANSITION

Informed policy and implementation allows for the best possible approaches to just transition. When actions are deeply rooted in empirical data and lived realities, they bridge the critical gap between high-level ambitions and community level needs of the transition. For the JTM to achieve this, it is necessary to gather information not only from conventional science, such as those presented by the IPCC, but also from traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge.⁶

⁵ *Id* at para. 2.

⁶ Article 7.5, Paris Agreement, 2015

The implementation of just transition must be informed with best practices from scientific research and local knowledge. These necessary aspects of just transition are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they present an opportunity for synergistic implementation. Ensuring that policy is created with and for the benefit of grassroots communities would allow the transition to acquire much needed local and indigenous knowledge, while fulfilling a multi-stakeholder approach. Further, this would integrate a co-production approach of knowledge creation⁷ directly into the policy design cycle. As such, it is recommended that the JTM explore policy co-creation with grassroots communities.⁸ This would center lived experiences of local and indigenous communities in policy while also infusing their valuable knowledge for the localization of implementation.

Vital knowledge from TILKS is often difficult to access. Several barriers, from cultural, economic and administrative reasons, exist for relevant actors to effectively obtain necessary information. To achieve a properly informed transition, the JTM must function to ease the access to information. A collective and accessible knowledge platform relevant to just transition can fulfil this necessity. Not only would platforming relevant knowledge remove barriers to information, but it would also smoothen the sharing of best practices as recommended by our earlier point on the JTM as a facilitator of knowledge sharing.

Climate action should be adaptive in its implementation.⁹ As such, this must reflect in the method the transition is informed. Arguably, the best science iteratively comes from theory and practice that begets better theory and better practice. Therefore, a scientifically informed JTM must continuously seek better knowledge from evolving practices as the transition is implemented. It is imperative that the JTM not only monitor but also intentionally gather information for future efforts from on-going implementation. The gathering of feedback for better information may take the form of stakeholder consultations, conventional hard-science assessments, community reports, and other appropriate approaches. Such knowledge must be used to assess current knowledge and information, this would greatly improve the guidance behind the implementation of transitions.

Just transition must be achieved through the guidance of the best available science, which includes not just institutional knowledge but also existing knowledge from communities. The JTM can be better informed and implemented through the integration of

⁷ 17.4.4.2.1 Co-production; IPCC sixth assessment report Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability

⁸ 1.4.1 IPCC 2019 Special Report on Climate Change and Land

⁹ Adaptive Management; IPCC sixth assessment report Glossary II

grassroots perspectives in policy crafting, removal of barriers to knowledge, and the continuous improvement of available information through implementation feedback.

3. JTM AS A MECHANISM OF AND WITH NON-PARTY STAKEHOLDERS

Just transition must consider the context and perspectives of non-Party stakeholders who will be greatly affected by the shift to a low-carbon economy, and whose knowledge and lived experiences are vital in creating concrete and context-specific pathways toward achieving just transition.¹⁰ Therefore, the JTM should function as a mechanism *of and with* non-Party stakeholders to ensure broad and meaningful participation from civil society and the private sector.

The JTM should create and institutionalize spaces for social dialogue, where non-Party stakeholders such as workers, women, children, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities are not only consulted but are able to actively shape what just transition means in their specific contexts. Social dialogue and participatory processes may take the form of forums, consultations, citizen assemblies, and multi-stakeholder platforms.¹¹ Non-Party stakeholders should not be mere recipients of information during these discussions, but instead should be active participants who can freely share their thoughts, experiences, and recommendations. Moreover, these social dialogue and participatory platforms should allow for non-Party stakeholders to assert and reiterate their rights.

For example, labor unions, micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises, and other economic actors should be involved and heard in the just transition planning and discussions as their existing activities may need to be reoriented or supported in light of structural changes brought about by the transition to a low carbon economy. Women and children, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities, also bear the brunt of these changes so it is crucial that their experiences and priorities inform the design of transition measures to ensure that their rights are respected and they are empowered throughout the process. Moreover, engagement with the academe and research institutions is crucial, as empirical findings and methodological expertise can guide the development of effective, evidence-based and equitable just transition policies at the local, regional, national, and

¹⁰ UNFCCC, *United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme*
https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UAE_JTWP_cop30.pdf

¹¹ F. K. Phillips, *Participation of Non-Party Stakeholders under the UNFCCC: Options for Future Engagement* (2018).

international context.¹² Engagement with these different non-Party stakeholders should be done throughout all stages of transition from the initial assessment stage, through the design and implementation of just transition measures, to ex post assessments.¹³ These should not happen only at the domestic level, but also at the international level through the JTM.

By centering non-Party stakeholders at the heart of its design and implementation through meaningful participation, the JTM can move beyond rhetorical commitments and function as a truly transformative instrument. Centering the voices, rights, and lived experiences of those most affected by the transition is foundational to achieving social equity in the process of decarbonization.

CONCLUSION

The success of the JTM hinges on its ability to translate international climate ambitions to equitable, community level realities. To ensure that justice remains the foundation of the transition, the JTM must operate as a localized, inclusive, and highly adaptable framework. As outlined, this requires the mechanism to enable domestic transition pathways, act with the dual guidance of the best available science and TILKS, and be built with the inclusion of non-Party stakeholders. By embracing these points, the JTM can transcend its role as a mere administrative instrument to a truly transformative mechanism.

¹² F. Denton, K. Halsnæs, K. Akimoto, S. Burch, C. D. Morejon, F. Farias, ... and S. Some, "Accelerating the Transition in the Context of Sustainable Development," 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*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/chapter/chapter-17/>

¹³ UNFCCC-KCI, *Guidelines and Policy Frameworks for Just Transition of the Workforce and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs: Compilation and Synthesis Report*, <https://unfccc.int/documents/648793>