

Just and Equitable Transitions in the Context of Climate Change

The focus of CSW61 is on women's economic rights in the **changing world of work**. It is abundantly clear that the future of women's paid and unpaid work will be irrevocably changed by the existence and escalating threats of climate change. This is the first time that the Commission has considered this topic and it is unlikely that it will be considered again. Consequently this may be the only opportunity the Commission has to give serious consideration to policies and decisions that must be made to ensure the future of work addresses climate change impacts and does so in ways that advance, rather than diminish, women's labour rights and other human rights.

The current draft of the Agreed Conclusions does not adequately address or connect the impact that climate change has and will have on the changing world of work. The absence of the concept and obligation to ensure a just and equitable transition of the economy is a glaring omission. The concept of a just transition provides an opportunity to completely rethink the very basis of the existing, imbalanced and exploitative global economy and address the sexual division of labour. Consequently it should be a priority for feminist movements.

Just and equitable transition

In 2013 the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution and set of conclusions concerning decent work, sustainable development and 'green jobs' and put forward a policy framework for a just transition.

The subsequent paper from the ILO Expert Group Meeting proposed "A just transition for all towards an environmentally sustainable economy, needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty."¹

Through the Paris Agreement governments committed to "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 inclusion of the reference in the Paris Agreement was the result of strong advocacy from trade unions and allies and the leadership of Argentina.

The focus of 'just transitions' has often been on transitioning workers out of dirty industries into sustainable renewables – a transition that would primarily benefit male workers. A 'just **and equitable**' transition should address inequalities within economic systems and recognize that a transition of the economy must have gender equitable benefits. To that end, a 'just and equitable transition' must challenge the gendered division of labour, recognising that women often work in low emissions yet low waged, insecure and informal employment, including subsistence farming, service industries, domestic, and work.²

An expert group meeting on gender and climate change, convened prior to the Paris negotiations, recommended that policies to secure just and equitable transitions be further developed:

The concept of 'just transitions' traces back to trade union advocacy when job losses were experienced as economies moved from fossil fuel to renewables. The concept, however, could have broader applications, including in regards to the sexual division of labour and changes to women's work more broadly. The need for transformational systemic change for climate justice provides

¹ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf, p.4

² To see other elements of such a transformative approach, see http://apwld.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/5Fs_briefer_v2.pdf

opportunities to re-think the current sexual division of labour and promote decent work for women in under-valued fields such as care work; the (social) service sector; sustainable, locally-focused agriculture and fisheries; as well as locally governed renewable energies with women participating equally as shareholders, owners and fairly-remunerated workers. In such contexts, just and equitable transitions need to be gender-sensitive and transformative. (UN Women, UN DESA, UNFCCC EGM/GR-CR/Report)³.

During negotiations for a Gender Decision at the UNFCCC COP22 several governments (including Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, Philippines, Mexico) sought to include text on just and equitable transitions in the decision. The language was unsuccessful with some parties (EU and US) arguing that the language was more suitable to other venues (like the CSW). So, now is the time to make that assertion a reality!

Asia Pacific Recommendation:

UNESCAP and UN Women held a CSW preparatory meeting entitled: Asia and Pacific Policy Dialogue on “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work.” The recommendations arising from that meeting include:

55. Ensure that the transition to low-carbon economies incorporates a just and equitable transition of the workforce by encouraging productive technological change in support of decent work in the public and private sector for women, especially in the area of climate change mitigation and adaptation. In this regard, recognise that a just and equitable transition to low carbon economies may support decent work opportunities for women, while redistributing care work.

56. Ensure that women and their organisations are meaningfully involved and engaged in climate change and disaster management discussions, in particular, through women’s leadership.

57. Regulating industries to address the impact that climate change and land degradation has on the economy and women’s economic empowerment and rights

The Women’s Rights Caucus proposes that language relating to climate change and the just and equitable transition necessary to secure decent work and a sustainable planet for women be included in 4 parts of the text.

The paragraphs are designed to:

1. Recognise the impact of climate change
2. Commit to developing relevant policies
3. Provide gender responsive climate financing
4. Direct ILO, UN Women and UNFCCC to elaborate on this area of work.

There are some additional proposals throughout the text.

Proposals focused on the preambular section

Climate change

23. (9.3 merged with 9.4 and 10.4)

The Commission reiterates its concern over the challenge climate change poses to the achievement of sustainable development and economic empowerment of women and that women and girls, who face inequality and discrimination, are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and

³
https://unfccc.int/files/gender_and_climate_change/application/pdf/egmreport_bonn_final_25_november_2015.pdf, pp. 6-7

other environmental issues, including, inter alia, [unsustainable production and consumption patterns](#), persistent drought, desertification, land degradation, deforestation, dust storms, natural disasters, extreme weather events, sea level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification, [poor quality water, global warming, hazardous waste, toxic chemicals and pesticide residues, radioactive waste, armed conflicts and its consequences](#); Furthermore, the Commission recognizes, in line with the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, that countries should [ensure a just and equitable transition towards an environmentally sustainable economy, that contributes to the goals of decent work for all, gender equality, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty and](#), when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote, and consider gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Comments: It is imperative that the text includes reference to 'just transition' or 'just and equitable transition' as the pivotal reference in the Paris Agreement to decent work in the context of climate change. There was broad support from the majority of member states to include 'just and equitable transition' in the Gender Decision of the COP22 under the UNFCCC. A limited number of member states asserted that it was best dealt with elsewhere (including CSW). It is unlikely that there will be another opportunity to address the gendered consequences of climate change in the context of the changing nature of work. (Based on Paris Agreement, ILO Guidelines on a Just Transition, UNFCCC EGM/GR-CR/Report, UNESCAP Asia Pacific CSW Preparatory Meeting Recommendations).

The additional environmental and climate threats are all included in the Beijing Platform para 258.b.ii

In the operational text

pp. alt Develop and implement gender-responsive climate change policies to ensure a just and equitable transition for all towards a low carbon, environmentally sustainable economy that contributes to the goals of decent work for all, gender equality, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty including by increasing climate financing to gender equitable transition strategies and by expanding and re-prioritising fiscal expenditure allowing investment in public sector employment, physical and social public infrastructure, education, renewable energies managed by women, social care infrastructure and universal social protection. (Based on Paris Agreement, ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition and UNESCAP CSW61 EGM)

Comment: If there is only one operational paragraph on climate change it needs to more directly focus on the focus area and address the content and process of developing climate policies that impact on women's paid and unpaid labour. Proposed text is from Paris Agreement, ILO Guidelines and UNESCAP / UN Women regional preparatory meeting.

In relation to climate finance

55 (bis): Increase finance for gender-responsive strategies to prevent, mitigate and manage the impact of climate change and urge developed countries to jointly implement their commitment to provide at least USD 100 billion annually to the Green Climate Fund for climate mitigation and adaptation while significantly increasing adaptation finance from current levels and to further provide appropriate technology and capacity building support. Further, ensure that international climate finance supports a gender equitable and just transition of economies and recognises the indivisible links between climate adaptation, women's paid and unpaid work, poverty eradication and gender equality in line with international and regional agreements;

Comment: Language based on Previous African Group Proposal with important of climate finance commitments. The Final reference added as no climate proposals with a primary gender equality target have been approved at the GCF and the GCF board appears to struggle with the links between women's livelihoods, unpaid and paid work and climate change adaptation.

In directions to UN agencies for future work

59 (bis) NEW The Commission further calls upon the ILO, UN Women and the UNFCCC to develop guidelines for a just and equitable transition towards environmentally and gender just sustainable economies for all.