

23rd session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written statement by the United Nations University — Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)

Agenda item 6: Principles of effective governance for sustainable development

Challenges for Non-Annex I parties

- The Paris Agreement prioritizes inclusivity by highlighting the importance of fair access to sustainable development, poverty eradication, ensuring a just transition for the workforce, upholding human rights, promoting the right to health, protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, advancing gender equality, and ensuring intergenerational equity (Preamble). By 2022, 34 developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region had committed to carbon neutrality or net zero goals, while eight had already submitted long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies (LTS) under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement. As more countries formulate LTSs, an urgent need arises to identify and implement strategies to achieve leaving no one behind (LNOB) within these policies.
- Concerning opportunities and outcomes, projections indicate a net change in employment stemming from climate mitigation efforts within the Asia-Pacific region to reach approximately 14.2 million by 2030, albeit accompanied by notable risks of economic displacement and the perpetuation of gender and geographical inequalities within non-renewable energy sectors.
- Within the region's labor market, significant gender disparities persist, with women facing higher rates of unemployment or engaging in vulnerable forms of employment. Therefore, transitions towards green employment avenues must prioritize measures to mitigate sectoral and occupational segregation.
- Moreover, challenges related to inequality in land access, insecure land tenure, and the limited legal recognition of indigenous communities pose substantial hurdles for countries aiming to deliver equitable climate solutions.
- Among the eight developing countries in the region with LTSs, six have acknowledged the urgent necessity of addressing gender and inclusion concerns within their climate action agendas. These countries include Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, the Marshall Islands, Nepal, and Tonga. However, the degree to which gender equality is incorporated and the level of detail provided vary among these nations.
- Despite commitments to augment government expenditure on welfare benefits in Thailand and to implement social safeguards in Cambodia, there is a notable scarcity in implementing social protection systems as integral components of climate strategies to reduce inequalities.
- Nations envisage a comprehensive overhaul of their economic structures to foster low-carbon development. However, a pressing need exists to expand access to financing for

vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded communities, including small-scale farmers and those engaged in the informal sector.

Recommendations for Non-Annex I parties

- *Sustain decent work and reinforce labor rights to mitigate disruptions caused by the transition.*

Efforts to promote green jobs must prioritize inclusive employment opportunities for diverse demographics, including women, men, youth, older individuals, and vulnerable populations. This necessitates integrating social sustainability assessments and inclusive transition frameworks. Policymakers should strengthen environmental regulations, occupational safety and health policies, and labor market measures to mitigate job loss and enhance skills development, fostering policy coherence and institutional collaboration. For instance, the Philippines has exemplified this approach by embedding green job initiatives in national policies and conducting policy forums to facilitate integration, alongside piloting green business training programs.

- *Combine climate initiatives with social protection measures to maintain an adequate standard of living for all.*

Socially just climate action is crucial for ethical reasons and public support. Social protection policies reduce poverty, ensure income security, and mitigate climate impacts. For example, the Philippines replaced energy subsidies with taxes, offering benefits like electricity discounts for seniors and cash transfers for marginalized groups. Compensation mechanisms are needed to shield vulnerable groups from income shocks. Transitioning to green jobs should include unemployment insurance and targeted cash transfers where necessary.

- *Promote investments in inclusive climate projects and establish financial inclusion regulations.*

Vulnerable populations often experience underinvestment in their communities. Policymakers should use evidence to advocate for investments in inclusive climate projects, prioritizing marginalized groups like women and ensuring gender equality. This involves developing investment plans that consider national climate targets, targets for vulnerable groups, and the initial capital investment required. Establishing a regulatory framework for financial inclusion is crucial to lift marginalized populations out of exclusion and poverty. Additionally, designing inclusive financial regulations can integrate considerations like Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) into government budgets. For example, since 2020, Indonesia has expanded its ministerial climate budget tagging mechanism to include gender-responsive climate budgeting.

- *Establish a people-centered and gender-sensitive monitoring, reporting, and evaluation process.*

Tracking just transition involves data-driven analysis and participatory investigations. Establishing a people-centered monitoring, reporting, and evaluation (MRE) process requires policymakers to understand diversity and marginalized groups, integrating gender mainstreaming and local community participation throughout policy stages.

Strengthening people-centered reporting involves supporting civil society in promoting access to information and communication technology for marginalized populations. Policymakers should utilize existing indices and databases, adapting them to interpret climate change impacts on different population groups and assess the social bias of carbon neutrality actions. For instance, Thailand mapped climate risks for children to develop child-sensitive climate policies, while Bangladesh prioritizes data collection on age, sex, and disability for its National Adaptation Plan MRE. Given the relative invisibility of marginalized groups in official data, policymakers must incorporate additional perspectives and triangulate information from alternative sources like academic publications and community-led data collection.

Challenges for Annex II parties

- Examination of the 7th National Communications (7NCs) reveals that marginalized groups such as remote populations, indigenous communities, individuals with high healthcare needs, and the elderly receive comparatively less attention from Annex II parties, with only three to four countries out of 23 countries (13% – 17%) offering support to these groups. Notably, specific domestic climate mitigation measures are lacking in addressing gender inequality within the analyzed 7NCs.
- Most developed countries offer support measures targeting at least one group of vulnerable energy users. Nevertheless, there is substantial potential for increasing inclusivity in net-zero policies by bolstering financial and non-financial support mechanisms and broadening the range of vulnerable energy users eligible for assistance.

Recommendations for Annex II parties

- *Identify vulnerable energy users through data collection and analysis of socioeconomic challenges for net zero emissions.*

Governments should collect and analyze relevant statistics and identify vulnerable energy users facing challenges accessing clean energy and energy efficiency solutions. Understanding, for example, the relationship between the affordability of clean energy and the distribution of clean energy among households by income level provides a crucial basis for planning effective support measures.

- *Improve governance mechanisms to harmonize climate change policies with socioeconomic policies.*

Governments should develop robust vertical and horizontal governance mechanisms to address the complex, cross-cutting sustainability issues involved in achieving the SDGs. Governance mechanisms and institutional structures must be integrated to address two critical aspects of just transitions: distributive justice and procedural justice. For distributive justice, governments should reformulate their institutional structures and mechanisms to enhance communications between the environment ministry and line ministries accountable for socioeconomic issues to ensure that all populations have access to and benefit from clean energy and energy efficiency

technologies. In addition, governments should engage vulnerable populations in decision-making processes and policies related to net zero.

- *Enhance support measures for vulnerable energy users to ensure equal access to clean energy through evidence-based information.*

To ensure equitable access to clean energy and energy efficiency solutions, governments must implement support measures for vulnerable energy users. Disclosing inclusive climate mitigation initiatives through international reporting processes like Biannual Transparency Reports under the Paris Agreement is essential to inspire similar actions globally and scale up inclusive decarbonization efforts. The European Commission's proposal for a Social Climate Fund aims to provide direct income support to vulnerable households, reducing emissions from road transport and buildings. Municipal policies, such as financial assistance for rooftop solar installations in Porto Torres (Italy) and collaboration with energy companies in Vienna (Austria) and Martorelles (Spain) to ensure energy supply to vulnerable populations, also play a significant role in reducing energy poverty.

These inputs are based upon UNU-IAS research findings, including the following publication:

- Kandpal, R., and M. Okitasari. 2022. “[Advancing Follow-up and Review for the SDGs: Lessons from the 2021 Voluntary National Reviews](#)”. UNU-IAS Policy Brief No. 36. Tokyo.
- Matsushita, K., Snower, D., Yamaguchi, S., Elder, M., Tsudaka, M., Takemoto, A., Korwatanasakul, U. and M. Okitasari. 2023. “[Integrated Approach for Well-Being, Environmental Sustainability, and Just Transition](#)”. Think7 Issue Paper.
- Okitasari, M., and U. Korwatanasakul. 2023. “[Leaving No One Behind in Carbon Neutrality Strategies: Insights from Developing Countries in Asia and the Pacific](#)”. UNU-IAS Policy Brief No. 39. Tokyo.
- Okitasari, M., Sunam, R., Mishra, R., Masuda, H., Morita, K., Takemoto, K. and Kanie, N. 2019. “[Governance and National Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Lessons from Voluntary National Reviews](#)”. UNU-IAS Policy Brief No. 18. Tokyo.
- Takemoto, A., A. Cros, M. Suzuki, and U. Korwatanasakul. 2022. “[Supporting Vulnerable Populations in the Transition to Net Zero Emissions: Priorities for Developed Countries](#)”. UNU-IAS Policy Brief No. 35. Tokyo.