

December 2019

Trade Unions' Topline Demands for COP25



1

Raise ambition with Just Transition

Unions want decent jobs on a living planet. Building trust through the guarantees of Just Transition measures for all workers, their families and communities, will make it possible for governments to raise ambition. The 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25) must show the commitment of governments to step up ambition in their development of new climate plans, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that are due in 2020.



2

Sign on to the "Climate Action for Jobs Initiative"

Unions urge governments to sign on to the "Climate Action and Jobs Initiative" launched at the September 2019 Climate Action Summit in New York. Unions need to be at the table so that the voice of workers that are affected by the climate crisis and climate policies are taken into account.



3

Commit to finance for low-carbon development, support the most vulnerable

Adequate climate finance is the cornerstone of effective climate policy. It is needed to ensure the low-carbon transition in the Global North and to put the Global South on a low carbon development path. Governments must live up to their promise to mobilise US \$100 billion annually by 2020.

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1. Foreword

We have just a decade left to stabilise the climate crisis and just one year for governments to raise their commitments to meet this test.

If we imagine the future where no one is left behind, where we act on the call of our children who have taken to the streets in fear and frustration, where people and their communities are well served by Just Transition measures to ensure inclusive economies, we can build it together. Workers and their unions have shown this year that they are part of the solution, part of the growing movement to demand action from their governments.

Deepening our dialogue with governments, industry sectors and cities we have also included our workplace activities in the fight for the planet. Our [“Climate Proof our Work”](#) campaign, saw unions and organisations in 23 countries challenge their bosses to a conversation about climate plans to act to climate proof their workplace, secure jobs and agree Just Transition measures.

In [September’s Global Week of Climate Action](#) many thousands of workers joined our young people on the streets to demand climate action. This was an extraordinary act of solidarity across the generations and we congratulate our members for all the actions they have undertaken.

And some countries have understood that Climate Justice and a Just Transition are necessary for climate ambition. Building on our successful negotiation last year during the COP24 in Katowice, where more than 50 countries signed up to the [“Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration”](#), we have negotiated now a [“Climate Action and Jobs Initiative”](#). It is supported by the United Nations and by more than 40 countries, where Spain and Peru have taken the lead. With the support of the ILO we are supporting implementation of Just Transition measures based on a dialogue with workers and their unions, with research to measure the impact on workers, with social protection measures, with plans for skills development and with investment in enabling infrastructure and jobs

Beyond the level of governments our partnership with C40 Cities is helping to support national unions and [global unions such as the ITF](#) and BWI engage in the dialogue to build net zero cities with emission free transport and circular economy developments. Cities can drive economic prosperity and must effectively play their part in addressing the global climate emergency.

“Cities are engines of growth, innovation and prosperity. The right investments can build sustainable and liveable cities and communities that will help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Paris Agreement. It is possible and realistic to realize net-zero urban emissions by 2050. But to get there, we will need the full engagement of city governments combined with national action and support.”

**António Guterres,
Secretary-w of the United Nations**

And heavy industry is moving. Steel, cement and aluminium employers expressed their support for reducing emissions at a specific UN forum on Industry Transition I contributed to during the [Climate Action Summit](#). LO Sweden is working with unions and industry in partnership with our Just Transition Centre and IndustriALL Europe to look at the industry policy measures required including innovation, skills and other Just Transition measures. Cement has similar challenges to aluminium and is now a target.

When you consider the [20 companies that are the biggest carbon emitters](#) most are fossil fuel companies and many of them are guilty of abuse of workers' rights, tacit minimalisation, or worse, evasion. Nevertheless, there are many jobs, good union jobs in these companies and we need them, wherever possible, to transition to lower emission areas of energy and relatedly products. Just as one example, these fossil fuel companies could work with responsible aviation companies and unions to shift the jet fuel mix, with the possibility of a 39% reduction in emissions before we even look to regulate effect technology advances and retrofits for airline fleets.

Corporate greed and profit at any cost can no longer underpin transition to a net zero future and no company can escape our attention.

As workers organisations we are faced with a very important responsibility. Social progress, has never come for free, without struggle from the people affected. This is also the case for climate protection. We need to fight for our place at the table and to see that our demands for climate justice are taken into account.

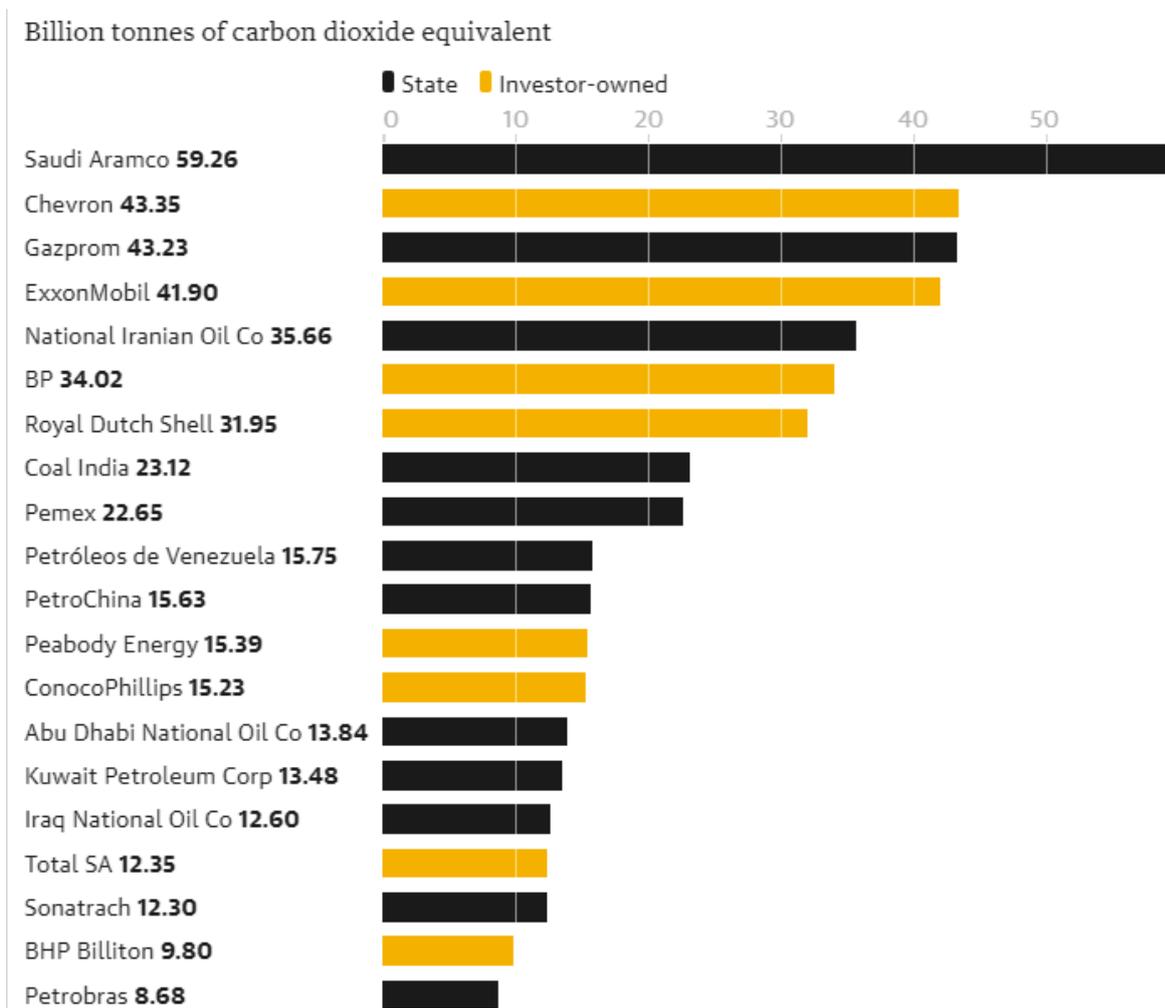
FAST FACT

Most people think it is not too late to avoid the worst effects of climate change but only so long as we take drastic action.

[YouGov Study June-July 2019](#)

The 20 firms behind a third of all carbon emissions

These 20 companies have contributed to 480bn tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent since 1965



Source: www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/09/revealed-20-firms-third-carbon-emissions

FAST FACT

A majority of people in 28 countries think climate change is likely to cause serious economic damage, destroy cities and start wars.

[YouGov Study June-July 2019](#)

We are horrified by the attacks by the Chilean Government on their own people whose despair and anger has been generated by the conditionality of the IMF which has taken a machete to the social contract and simply fuels greater economic failure. The tragic events behind COP25 are now symbolic in the fight for social justice.

The president's decision to cancel hosting the COP25 summit in Santiago shows yet again that social justice and climate justice are deeply connected. Last year, Brazil's far-right Bolsonaro government reneged on a commitment to host the COP, and now Chile's President Piñera has had to cancel as a direct result of misery and anger caused by his regressive policies. Another chance for governments to halt the climate emergency has been lost.

FAST FACT

We have a decade left to stabilise the planet. 2020 is critical to demand both ambitious NDCs and Just Transition commitments that get us to 40% emissions reduction by 2030 and to net zero by 2050.

As Spain steps in to host the COP in Madrid, the eyes of the world will continue to watch over the people in Chile and Latin America, and the ITUC stands with you at every turn. Spain's own story of a Just Transition for coal miners in the north west regions of the country will be on show at a critical time.

FAST FACT

Fifteen nations have declared the intention of reaching [net zero emissions in or before 2050](#). While most commitments come in policy documents, two countries (Norway and Sweden) have set the target in national legislation. [Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit \(ECIU\)](#)

Discussions during the COP will turn to the remaining parts of the Paris Rulebook that organises the implementation of the Paris Agreement and must reflect the need for more ambition. The countries will discuss rules for using market mechanisms to trade emission reduction credits. This is called the Article 6 discussion. We have major questions with these proposals. We must move rapidly to secure a path to zero emissions, so the business as usual trade rules cannot help. Experience from the past with Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which generated huge problems in terms of social and human rights, shows that this approach is not often conducive to the vital industry policy measures required and is simply exploitative, as well as too often constraining development in poorer countries when we need the very opposite. Furthermore and not least, there is the huge questions of environmental integrity (projects should effectively reduce emissions). Rather, we need trade reform that guarantees a fair competition floor with fundamental labour rights and environmental standards with compliance measures.

Our message for all country leaders: we have just 10 years. Talking is no longer enough - ambition and Just Transition plans are urgent to secure the trust of people in every nation.

- Stop the delaying measures, increase ambition in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
- Start implementing the social dialogue vital for agreements that deliver Just Transition for all.
- Legislate for climate action including procurement rules.
- Green New Deals must mean a new social contract in every country with labour rights, climate ambition and Just Transition at the core.

The ITUC will fight to see no one is left behind.

**Sharan Burrow, General-Secretary,
International Trade Union Confederation**

2. The Road to COP25



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Carbon emissions are increasing

In 2015 countries agreed on the landmark climate agreement in Paris. Unions were happy with the agreement as it was an answer to the need for a coherent multilateral approach to the climate crisis. During COP24 in Poland last year, countries decided on the rules to guide the implementation of the Paris Agreement. This is called the Paris Rulebook. While we understand that these rules are necessary to see that efforts are shared equally, we also see that emissions are not going down but keep increasing. That's why the priority is now with "Climate Ambition". Countries must shift from just negotiating agreements to implementing measures.

FAST FACT

Global carbon emissions jumped the most in seven years in 2018 as energy demand surged. China, India and the U.S. were responsible for two thirds of the 2.9% increase in consumption.

FAST FACT

Renewable energy consumption jumped 15% in 2018, near the record advance from a year earlier. China is adding more renewable energy than the world's most developed nations in the OECD combined.

Just Transition: pathways to high ambition

“There is a climate crisis. A net zero emissions economy with Just Transition measures is our only chance of survival.” Without the social dialogue vital to achieve progress on this, the impact on the economy can only worsen.

Canada, Germany, New Zealand and Spain have led the way with Just Transition agreements and South Africa and Scotland have Just Transition authorities in place while the UK and Sweden have climate laws and Sweden and India have breakthroughs in cleaner steel and cement. Industry policy is back but so too will be border protection measures if we can't reform the WTO.

Climate Proof Our Work – Unions taking action June 2019

Together workers, unions and employers are acting to climate-proof their businesses and put Just Transition measures at the heart of their plans.

People from around the world participated in the first international day of action to “Climate Proof our Work”. Together with their unions, workers in 23 countries were involved in the first event of its kind.

“Workers recognise the existential threat that is before us and the need for action. We are challenging business models and providing the momentum to align them with the transition effort. Amid the growing anxiety, we are reaching out to businesses to build together a net-zero future from the ground up.”

Sharan Burrow,
ITUC General Secretary

UN Climate Action Summit September 2019

United Nations Secretary General António Guterres pushed countries to step up their climate ambition at a special UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019. He asked all world leaders to come to New York City with concrete plans to strengthen their national climate commitments by next year. Signs of progress included that 67 countries have now [indicated their intention to enhance their Paris commitments to climate action by end of 2020](#), and separately, [77](#) countries have committed to targets to achieve carbon neutrality. The initiatives and stepped-up commitments from businesses, investors, cities and civil society are a small sign of hope.

Global Week of Climate Action - September 2019

Trade unions, social movements and climate activists across the world embarked on an historic week of mobilisations to demand climate action from 23 – 27 September. Millions of people stopped work, engaged in workplace actions and took to the streets to put pressure on governments to commit to the ambitious measures necessary to address the climate crisis.

“This is a wake-up call to the world. Young people have shown us the much-needed ambition, and it is our common duty to all future generations that we act decisively. Just Transition must be at the heart of tackling the climate emergency, which is already destroying livelihoods and communities and which will only worsen in the absence of decisive action.”

Sharan Burrow,
ITUC General Secretary

The mobilisations were successful in exerting maximum pressure on the United Nations' Climate Summit and uniting unions with youth movements

Missing in action

Many of the world's largest emitters were conspicuously absent from the stage — or from the summit altogether - such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, Japan and the United States. The UN Climate Action Summit confirmed that the most audacious governmental actions are taking place in small and mid-sized economies such as Costa Rica, Denmark, New Zealand and a group of Small Island States and Least Developed Countries. They pursue cooperation and respect science and multilateralism.

FAST FACT

Only one-sixth (16%) of global GDP is now covered by net zero emissions targets set by nations, regions and cities. [Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit \(ECIU\)](#)

The Climate Action Jobs Initiative

The ITUC succeeded in helping to set up a coalition of countries that committed to a set of Just Transition measures called the Climate Action Jobs Initiative.

43 countries committed to setting up national plans for Just Transition.

This new initiative was presented at the Secretary-General's 2019 Climate Action Summit on Monday 23 September at UN Headquarters in New York City. The initiative has been developed jointly by the UN, together with the International Labour Organization and other members of the Summit's Social and Political Drivers Action Area, co-led by Spain and Peru and with the active participation of the ITUC and the B-Team.

The initiative provides a roadmap for ensuring that people's jobs and well-being are at the centre of the transition to a carbon-neutral economy.

"Some 1.2 billion jobs or 40 per cent of world employment rely directly on a healthy and stable environment. Business cannot succeed on a planet that fails. Jobs cannot be sustained on a dying planet. We will need government, businesses and people everywhere to join these efforts so we can put climate action into a higher gear."

António Guterres,
Secretary-General of the United Nations

The new initiative calls on countries to formulate national plans for a Just Transition, creating decent work as well as green jobs, and sets out specific measures for inclusion in these plans, including:

- Assessing the employment, social, and economic impacts of climate action.
- Implementing skills development and upgrading measures.
- Designing innovative social protection policies to protect workers and vulnerable groups.
- Increasing the transfer of technology and knowledge to developing countries, and innovation and responsible investment.
- Fostering a conducive business environment to enable enterprises, in particular SMEs, to adopt low-carbon production processes.
- Devising economic policies and incentives to support and encourage enterprises' transition towards the environmentally sustainable production of goods and services.
- Creating mechanisms for inclusive social dialogue to build consensus for transformative and sustainable change.

The ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition, adopted through tripartite consensus, offer a framework to guide the transition to low-carbon economies that countries can make use of.

Implementation of the initiative will be spearheaded by the ILO, with support from the ITUC, B-Team and the International Organisation of Employers.

3. What's at stake – an ambition package for COP25



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COP25 is the climate ambition COP and we aim to get the following results:

- A clear and direct call to close the emissions gap through the submission of **enhanced NDCs by 2020** which are based on long-term strategies for carbon neutrality by 2050 and include target peak years to align with science.
- An **agreement on 'Markets and non-markets'** (Article 6).
- The work on **Response Measures** should start to contribute to climate ambition.
- A strong result on the **loss and damage** negotiations.
- The second phase of the **Gender Action Plan**.
- After the recent replenishment of the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**, we need significant progress to meet the US\$100 billion commitment and in the discussions on the new finance target for 2025.
- Science and the **IPCC Special Report** on Global Warming of 1.5°C as the main basis for action.

a. NDCs

Countries need to step up their national climate commitments next year to avoid dangerous levels of global warming. Few countries have publicly confirmed that they will.

WRI has compiled a 2020 NDC Tracker, to help stakeholders and media keep track of which countries have indicated that they will enhance or update their NDC next year. It is available at www.climatewatchdata.org/2020-ndc-tracker.

The tracker represents those specific countries that are ready to be public about their intentions thus far. We know there are also other countries that are planning to enhance their NDCs but not yet ready to be public about doing so – see the [new study](#) from UNDP/UNFCCC, which includes those as well.

The COP in Madrid is the last stop before the important 2020 moment when countries have to present new and enhanced NDCs and long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies. If we add up the emission reduction plans from all countries, we're falling short on the objectives of the Paris Agreement to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. As the second NDCs should be submitted between November 2019 and February 2020, governments should work very hard now to prepare their NDCs.

The republic of the Marshall Islands was the first to present its new NDC and long-term strategy. President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, H.E. Dr. Hilda C. Heine: *“If we are to keep temperature increases within the 1.5°C limit we agreed in Paris, every country must increase the ambition of their existing targets by 2020 and chart a long-term pathway to net zero emissions by 2050. (...) Once again, my country has shown that if one of the smallest and most isolated nations can do it – so can everyone else, including the big emitters. Making the transition to net zero emissions makes sense for our global economy and for our environment, as well as for our people and our planet.”* <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/180924%20RMI%20press%20release%202050%20Strategy%20FINAL.pdf>

FAST FACT

14 countries have stated their intention to update an NDC by 2020 representing 10.1% of global emissions.

FAST FACT

68 countries have stated their countries have stated their intention to enhance ambition or action in an NDC by 2020, representing 8% of global emissions

b. An agreement on ‘Markets and non-markets’ (Article 6)

During COP24 there was one important aspect of the Paris Rulebook on which the Parties did not reach an agreement. Article 6 of the Paris Agreement offers countries the opportunity to cooperate with one another when implementing their NDCs. There are three approaches in the use of international cooperation mechanisms: (1) direct bilateral cooperation (Article 6.2); (2) a new sustainable development mechanism (Art. 6.4) and (3) non-market-based approaches (Art. 6.8). An agreement in Katowice was not possible, because the other countries could not accept the demand of Brazil to carry over emission credits from the Clean Development Mechanism (under the Kyoto Protocol), as they considered that these credits did not represent real emission reductions.

It remains to be seen if parties can negotiate an agreement in Madrid, as there are still many issues to be solved. The trade union movement has questions about the way in which trading emission credits can contribute to faster emission reductions, especially in view of the fast decarbonisation of the economy that is necessary. All countries have NDCs since the Paris Agreement, and have the obligation to reduce their emissions according to the objective of the Agreement. If they take their obligations seriously, it means that there will be very limited space for trading. Additionally, many elements of the rules for the internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs) under Art 6.2 and for the crediting mechanism under Art 6.4 remain unresolved. They must be designed in a way that avoids double counting and enables an effective tracking and assessment of the impact of trading. Both are crucial to allow any increase in countries' ambition through trading.

Besides the above issues regarding the ‘environmental integrity’ of the Article 6 mechanisms, there is also a financial dimension that must be settled. Part of the revenues (“a share of the proceeds”) of the

trade in emission reductions under the sustainable development mechanism should be used to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change to meet the costs of adaptation. This one of the many complex pieces in the climate finance puzzle. Even more uncertainty remains on the proposals on the table regarding the ‘non-market-based approaches’. Examples of these are cooperation between countries on the phase out of fossil fuel subsidies.

c. The work on Response Measures should start to contribute to climate ambition

During COP24, governments set up the ‘Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures’ (KCI). The KCI must support the work programme of the ‘forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures’ through building awareness and enhancing information-sharing through the exchange and sharing of experience and best practices; preparing technical papers, case studies, concrete examples and guidelines; receiving input from experts, practitioners and relevant organisations; organising workshops. While Just Transition is one of the themes of the Forum and the Committee, all progress is extremely slow due to political games between the parties. For the fossil fuel countries, response measures are a way to demand compensation for the loss of revenues in the transition to a zero-emission world. The union movement asks the parties to take their responsibility and give the discussion on Just Transition measures (experience sharing, setting up guidelines, etc.) the attention it urgently needs.

d. Loss and Damage

Six years ago, at COP19 in Warsaw, the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) was set up to “*address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow onset events in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change*”.

This year, the COP will formally review the performance of the WIM. The WIM has three functions: (1) knowledge sharing, (2) strengthening dialogue and (3) enhancing action and support (including financial). As we see that the impact and frequency of climate change related disasters only increases, it is a more than legitimate demand of the developing countries that the third function of the WIM must be strengthened.

FAST FACT

The horrible impact of tropical Cyclone Idai, caused catastrophic damage in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, leaving more than 1,300 people dead

e. Gender and climate change

COP25 is expected to adopt the second phase of the Gender Action Plan (GAP).

The GAP, created under the Lima work programme on gender, seeks to advance women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and promote gender-responsive climate policy and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention and the work of Parties, the secretariat, United Nations entities and all stakeholders at all levels.

The second phase is an opportunity to focus more on implementation (mostly at the national level) and the integration with disaster risk reduction, health, Just Transition policies, and the links with the needs of indigenous peoples.

f. Stepping up the work of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) after its replenishment

Climate finance refers to local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change. The Paris Agreement calls for financial assistance from Parties with more financial resources to those that are less endowed and more vulnerable. When adopting the Paris Agreement, Parties confirmed the goal of jointly mobilising US\$ 100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is the world’s biggest multilateral climate fund. The Fund seeks to mobilise both public and private finance to support a paradigm shift toward low-emissions and climate-resilient development, balance funding between mitigation and adaptation, achieve a broad array of benefits, and promote gender-responsive policies and activities.¹ A total of 27 countries raised \$9.8 billion at a pledging conference in Paris in October to fund green projects for the 2020-2023 period. While this is a good

¹ WRI, 2019. “Key Policy Issues in the Green Climate Fund A Guide for the Perplexed” <https://wriorg.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/key-policy-issues-green-climate-fund.pdf>

result, it is by far not enough to deal with the climate challenges that the global south is facing. In July 2019, the ITUC participated, with a delegation of trade union representatives from Brazil, The Philippines, Zimbabwe and Korea, in the 23rd Board meeting of the GCF (Songdo B23).

The union team was geographically diverse with a broad range of expertise in the group. The team had the chance to better understand the functioning of the GCF and the broader climate finance debate and exchange views and positions with the GCF staff and civil society observers on the need to introduce more explicit Just Transition measures in the work of the GCF.

Building on the work at the GCF in July, the ITUC will organise a workshop during COP25 to step up our work on climate finance. Check the [daily programme](#) for more information.

g. IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C

The IPCC is made up of 195 governments – all members of either the UN or WMO. When it

commissions a report, thousands of volunteer international experts – from science, economics and policy – contribute to the process.

The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C was published in 2018. The next IPCC report will be its sixth assessment report (AR6) published in 2021 on (1) The latest climate science (2) Mitigation strategies and (3) Impact and adaptation.

IPCC 1.5°C Recommendations

Global net anthropogenic CO2 emissions needs to decline about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030.

And reach net zero emissions globally by 2050. Renewables need to provide 70-85% of global electricity by 2050.

FAST FACT

The Science is in. A majority of people in 28 countries believe that climate change is happening, and that humanity is at least partly responsible.

[YouGov Study June-July 2019](#)



4. Climate Action in Latin America

Escazú agreement: Leaving no one behind

To contribute to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development, the first regional environmental treaty of Latin America and the Caribbean guarantees the full and

effective implementation of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters.

The global union movement gives its complete support to this agreement and asks all governments that have not done so already to ratify it, with a specific call to the government of Chile.

The Escazú Agreement

Placing equality at the centre of sustainable development and leaving no one behind



Environmental Information



Participation in environmental decision-making



Access to justice in environmental matters



Environmental defenders



Capacity-building and cooperation

To contribute to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development, the **first regional environmental treaty of Latin America and the Caribbean** guarantees the full and effective implementation of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters (**Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development**).



What does TUCA's Development Platform of the Americas propose for Just Transition and Climate Change?



A Just Transition is the priority proposal of the trade union movement in face of the negative consequences of climate change on people. It is defined as a set of policies to ensure that the transition and the path toward production with low emission of greenhouse gases also offers opportunities to workers and the communities involved. Workers and the communities must not bear the highest costs of the negative consequences caused by changes they are not responsible for.

- ✓ All countries of the region draw a national strategy on climate change consistent with their responsibility with participation of trade unions in policymaking for adaptation and mitigation.
- ✓ States with greater historical responsibility for environmental degradation and emission of greenhouse gases must pay higher costs of adaptation and mitigation.
- ✓ Overcoming the energy crisis is a core issue in the construction of an alternative model for the region. Universalisation of the access to energy in all regions.
- ✓ Stricter restrictions on concession-granting for energy projects, ensuring social dialogue and previous consultations with the affected population.
- ✓ Gradual reduction of the dependence on fossil fuels through the transformation of each economic activity.
- ✓ Establish social protection contents in Just Transition programmes for all workers, ensuring decent work for the region.
- ✓ We stand for the real transfer of technology that has an impact on climate change. Patents cannot be an impediment to the transfer of technology and, in turn, transferred technology cannot generate dependency and foreign debt.



Just Transition Centre in Brazil



With support from TUCA and the Just Transition Centre, CUT Brazil is building a national platform on Just Transition as an alternative, worker-centred model for managing change from the climate crisis and new technology. A Brazilian model for Just Transition will put people first, reverse the environmental crisis, and guarantee jobs, rights, public services, and just income distribution. So far this work has included a [workshop](#) with affiliates from key sectors and social movement partners; educational materials for grassroots members ([video](#)); and an initiative on decent jobs in renewable energy.

5. Climate Action in Spain

A Just Transition is possible

Anger, compassion and determination are ingredients in the emotional mix of communities in transition. This is the case in the mining regions of north west Spain.

Miners' unions have played an important role in shaping the future for all people in Spain, from standing up to the dictatorship of General Franco to negotiating a phase out of the coal industry with Just Transition measures.

The Just Transition deal replaces subsidies to the coal industry with a sustainable development plan. Ten pits and open cast mines will close resulting in the loss of 1,677 jobs. The deal covers eight companies with 12 production units in four regions of Spain.

In Castile and León, the courage and the resilience of mine workers and their unions, determined to secure a future for their communities, is an inspiration. For fourth generation miners – whose predecessors carved the birth of a tough industry – to be the generation that sees its demise is a painful reality.

Yet, while there is a sadness to see the loss of a 120-year legacy of coal mining and the rich contribution to community prosperity, there is an acknowledgement of the climate crisis and the reality of an exit from burning coal for energy. The anger is aimed at broken promises from previous transitions and the corruption that has seen funds redirected from affected workers and their communities to politically motivated priorities at all levels.

This time they demand it be different. The Just Transition agreement negotiated with the Spanish Government gives some hope but to ensure the funds are directed to an economic plan, with jobs for the future in these communities, the union demand is a national authority - a Just Transition agency. Its role would be to directly fund integrated economic plans for the region and each of the communities based on the plans agreed by the economic actors in those communities - unions, employers and community leaders.

Of course, pensions and pre-pension guarantees along with income support must go straight to the workers and their families. Sustainable jobs with a secure future is the key demand. These workers and their families want a secure economic future that ends the dominant economic monoculture of today.

The determination to fight for their communities is channelled to an integrated action plan. Both the Mayor of León and the Mayor of Villablino are community leaders standing in partnership for a Just Transition. The strength of community bonds are on show when a four-generation mine-owning family channels its resources and commitment into plans for living museums and small production for other potential uses of coal but also renewable energy parks and the potential for cleaning and reusing water from mine wastage.

"I'm a 4th generation miner. Miners will defend their jobs, but not at any price. If we get a job offer in the region, we will say yes. We don't have to be miners for ever, we do want jobs."



**Omar Garcia, Miner,
Castile and León,
Spain**

Indeed, the power of social dialogue is gaining momentum to deliver inclusive and sustainable solutions. That's why the ITUC awarded the Dorje Khatri Award for trade union climate action to the ITUC Spanish affiliates CC.OO., UGT and USO for their use of social dialogue to achieve a Just Transition for miners in the country's northern coal-mining regions. Dorje Khatri, a leader of the Nepalese Sherpas union and a climate activist, lost his life in an avalanche on Mount Everest in 2014.

At the heart of a Just Transition is the compassion and the solidarity of workers for each other and for their communities and the beautiful pristine environment of this part of the world.

Just Transition: the future with secure jobs on a living

planet - that's the ambition but we must fight to leave no one behind.

Just Transition: the future with secure jobs on a living planet - that's the ambition but we must fight to leave no one behind.

6. ITUC @ COP25

An overview of our union activities at COP25 in Madrid can be found at tinyurl.com/unions-cop25

The programme will be updated as new information becomes available.

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