

Time to take stock

COP28 and the road to a Just Transition

Alexia Faus Onbargi, Aparajita Banerjee and Susan S. Ekoh
German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)



Bonn, 29 November 2023. One of the highlights of this year's UN climate change conference 'COP28' - from 30 November to 12 December in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)- will be the first ever 'Global Stocktake'. In this highly anticipated process, governments will "take inventory" of where we are, globally, in our implementation of the Paris Agreement, specifically regarding limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

A synthesis report published by the UN climate secretariat in September, paints a bleak picture: ongoing, rising global emissions mean we are objectively *not* on track, while the window of opportunity to limit global warming is rapidly closing. As outlined in the synthesis report, key to achieving the Paris Agreement is a 'Just Transition' (JT), a buzzword long circulating in policy spaces that has come to mean a range of energy, sus-

tainability and whole-of-society transitions and transformations (though often narrowed down to employment transitions for fossil fuel workers). A Just Transition will indeed require accelerating the global just energy transition, but will also require operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund agreed upon at COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, and potentiating gender-responsive climate action and finance.

Given the energy sector's disproportionate impact on emissions, accelerating the global energy transition – and slashing emissions before 2030 – are set to be key priorities of COP28 as announced by its UAE presidency. Here we expect ongoing attention to existing and new Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JET-PS), a legacy of the Glasgow COP26. These are plurilateral financial agreements between high-income countries (including the EU) with select emerging economies to support a just fossil fuel phase out and transform national energy systems. Such partnerships can be blueprints for other partnerships that are bilateral in nature and that focus on both climate and development; indeed, Germany's new 'P+ partnerships', fomenting both mitigation and adaptation, are cases in point. Such development cooperation partnerships are important avenues towards JTs given that they can target countries' sustainable development needs and go beyond energy transitions.

“A Just Transition will indeed require accelerating the global just energy transition, but will also require operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund agreed upon at COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, and potentiating gender-responsive climate action and finance.”

Another high-level topic at this year's COP is the Loss and Damage Fund, a monumental funding arrangement established at last year's COP for vulnerable countries to address the adverse impacts of climate change. Led by a Transitional Committee (TC) composed of members nominated by Parties to the UN climate secretariat, the past year has seen several meetings to develop recommendations on the operationalisation of the new fund for consideration and adoption at the COP28. The process saw intense debates, particularly around the question of eligibility and allocation of support, as well as contributor base

– critical areas for establishing a 'just' new climate finance mechanism. Human mobility was also discussed at the TC workshops as a necessary aspect to be covered by the funds' scope, given the current impacts of climate change on internal and cross-border displacements. There is great expectation for COP28 to deliver on a final agreement to operationalise the fund and deliver just climate finance. This will be imperative to accelerate JTs in the face of common but differentiated responsibilities for climate change.

Finally, the gender dimension of climate action in JT is crucial and is set to be a key priority of COP28 as the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan established under COP23 is up for review next year. Existing gender inequalities in many parts of the world – with women having less access than men to education, resources and land ownership – prevent their full access to climate mitigation and adaptation finance. Many women also bear some of the harshest impacts of energy, fuel and transport poverty around the world, and are disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of climate change. Despite these challenges being long recognised, IDOS research through the NDC-SDG Connections Tool suggests that there has been minimal progress in prioritising gender in climate actions worldwide. Transitions that are not gender-responsive (such as, for example, by committing to a culture of care) and particularly in climate finance strategies, cannot be expected to yield JTs. This year's IDOS all-female delegation will be closely monitoring gender-related negotiations on 4 December.

As the world takes stock, it is important to remember that implementing the Paris Agreement and achieving a Just Transition for all will require integrating equality, equity and justice in future climate mitigation and adaptation policies, strategies and programmes. Fast-tracking the global just energy transition, securing just climate finance for developing countries, and potentiating gender-responsive climate action and finance are essential. It is also important to be on the same page when it comes to JT, though, given the flurry of terms and concepts currently associated with it, exactly what a JT is and how it should be governed remains unclear. Our IDOS delegation at COP will research this question by gauging attendees' views on JT through an anonymous survey. In addition, IDOS will co-host an official side-event on 6 December, on 'Designing Coherent and Equitable Climate Policies for a Just Transition' with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and the Green Club.