



UNITED FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS

The purpose of this note is to reflect the main themes and diversity of the UNited for Climate Justice exchanges thus far, in order to inform further discussion in New York. In doing so, the note draws upon the key messages of steering committee members. Full details of the proposals and underlying reasoning are available in the Declaration with Guiding Proposals and the accompanying Policy Paper authored by C. Billingham, FEPS Policy Advisor.

THE CHALLENGE – CLIMATE CHANGE’S TRIPLE INJUSTICE:

Climate change raises profound questions of justice. In particular, unchecked climate change is resulting in a ‘triple injustice’ – hitting hardest the countries least responsible for climate change;¹ disproportionately impacting the poor and vulnerable communities; and leaving a legacy of risks and hardships for young people and future generations.

THE RESPONSE – TOWARDS CLIMATE JUSTICE:

The necessary response is to shape proposals for climate action that directly address the injustices of climate change, in particular by focusing on strengthening inter-country, intra-country and inter-generational equity.² Such proposals should support ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and achievement of the

1 S. Jahangir Hasan Masum, key messages.

2 Céline Charveriat, et al, Background Paper, p 2.



Sustainable Development Goals, should facilitate decarbonisation,³ and should be consistent with sustainable development, economic well-being,⁴ fundamental rights and freedoms,⁵ and social justice.⁶

In this context, the project has developed five guiding proposals for climate justice. These five proposals correspond to the broad thematic areas of just transition, greening finance flows, empowering young people, human rights, and nature-based solutions. Collectively, these five topics respond to the injustices of climate change.

FIVE GUIDING PROPOSALS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE:

1. Include Just Transition plans in the process of preparing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

The key proposition is for Parties to the Paris Agreement include Just Transition plans in the process of preparing their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), based on in-country preparatory dialogue with social partners.

This proposal is one practical expression of the identified need for a ‘New Social-Ecological Contract’,⁷ according to which ambitious climate mitigation does not mean abandoning communities, regions and workers in the carbon-intensive economy. Just transition is a commitment to solidarity,⁸ investing in training, skills and the availability of decent work. It also means enabling affected communities to take ‘ownership of the decision to change’ and to have agency in transition planning.⁹ The Government of Spain’s Just Transition Strategy is a key example in this regard.

3 Amit Kumar, key messages.

4 Jo Leinen, key messages.

5 Valentina Durán, key messages.

6 Louis Lemkow, key messages.

7 Policy Paper, 13ff.

8 Louis Lemkow, key messages.

9 Policy Paper, 17.



Just transition planning is a key enabler to achieve rapid decarbonisation with community consent and social justice.¹⁰ The project also discussed a variety of decarbonisation measures, such as the creation of ‘oil and coal free zones’¹¹ and ‘fossil fuel free zones’¹²

2. Climate-proof global investment, finance and trade

As the Paris Agreement recognises, effective climate actions requires ‘[m]aking finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development’.¹³ The key proposal on this topic is to commit to climate-proofing every investment and asset category, while providing finance to stipulate solutions and entrepreneurship, crowd-in private sector. The aim is to channel finance to activities which support climate mitigation and adaptation, while denying funds to activities which further harm the climate.

In support of this broad goal of climate-proofing global finance, a variety of concepts and specific proposals were suggested. The concept of ‘Climate Finance for All’ emphasises the need to transform all finance into climate-friendly finance, not limited to UNFCCC, North-to- South or public sector financing mechanisms.¹⁴ This concept also draws attention to the need to support the entrepreneurship and initiatives of Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), communities and individuals.¹⁵

Specific finance measures discussed included the promotion of renewable energy¹⁶ and phaseout of fossil fuel subsidies, climate impact assessments in government budgeting, climate-friendly procurement commitments in both government and the private sector, taxonomies of climate-friendly investments,

10 ITUC contribution, key messages.

11 Harris Gleckman, key messages.

12 Fergus Green, key messages.

13 Paris Agreement, Article 2.1(c).

14 Stephen Minas, key messages.

15 Ruka Sanusi, key messages.

16 Nnimmo Bassey, key messages.



green bonds, carbon taxation, the introduction of border adjustment taxes and taxing air transportation.¹⁷

3. Engage young people in decision-making through green youth councils

Inter-generational inequity is recognised as one of the key challenges of climate justice. To address this, the establishment of green youth councils to directly engage young people in climate decision-making is proposed. Green youth councils have already been established in some countries and could function at various levels of political decision-making, such as municipal, regional and national.

This proposal draws upon the broader need for participatory decision-making, intensified social dialogue, and a renewal of deliberative democracy in order to frame robust climate policies that have a ‘social licence to operate’, rather than being imposed from on high. The need to include young people in these deliberations is clear, given the disproportionate burden of climate consequences that they will bear. It is equally necessary to ensure gender parity at all levels of decision-making regarding climate change.

4. Establish an international framework for sustainability and environmental rights

Because the impacts of climate change will threaten the enjoyment of basic human rights and freedoms for many, a rights-basic approach is vital to the strategic planning the collective response to climate change.¹⁸ This is the basis for the proposal for an international framework for sustainability and environmental rights.

¹⁷ Jourdain Vaillant, key messages.

¹⁸ Cillian Lohan, key messages.



Ambitious climate action is necessary to safeguard important human rights, as landmark court rulings in diverse countries have indicated. Norms such as the right to participation, transparency of decision-making, and non-discrimination must be mainstreamed in climate policy and implementation. Protecting the rights of climate-displaced persons is a particular challenge.

Proposals in this field include extending the protections of existing agreements such as the Aarhus Convention and the Escázu Agreement,¹⁹ which provide for access to information, public participation in decision-making and (in the latter case) a non-regression principle²⁰ in environmental lawmaking. Deliberations also recognised the salience of current negotiations for a 'Towards a Global Pact for the Environment' to the further elaboration of an international rights-based framework.

5. Require a more adequate target of nature-based solutions in NDCs

The conservation of ecosystems and biological diversity is a vital enabler of both climate mitigation and adaptation. The project has therefore proposed that '[a] move towards nature-based solutions should be at the core of a new way of thinking',²⁰ which emphasises the need for wholistic responses to climate change and interconnected 'planetary boundaries'.

The IUCN defines nature-based solutions as 'actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits'. As with just transition planning, embedding nature-based solutions in the process of NDCs can mainstream nature-based solutions in climate policy development.

¹⁹ Valentina Durán, key messages.
²⁰ Policy Paper, 44.



A variety of proposals were advanced to increase the impact of nature-based solutions.²¹ These included resilient and sustainable agriculture,²² new measures to support poor communities in their stewardship of irreplaceable natural commons, and strengthening Indigenous and traditional communities' control over their traditional territories.²³ Greater protections for the environments and biodiversity of the ocean, which acts as an irreplaceable carbon sink, and an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, are further proposals which are not confined to explicitly 'climate' policy but which could have a major impact on the struggle to prevent dangerous climate change.



Drafted by Stephen Minas

Senior Research Fellow at the Transnational Law Institute, King's College London. Stephen has collaborated with FEPS on climate change-related projects and is a member of the FEPS Young Academics Network.

21 Maj Jensen, key messages.
22 Uttam K Sinha, key messages.
23 Edel Moraes, key messages.