



COP30 secures breakthrough on a 'Just Transition Mechanism'

Belém, Nov 22 (Hilary Kung) - COP30 marked a landmark victory for developing countries with the consensus to develop a Just Transition Mechanism (JTM).

According to seasoned observers, what once seemed unattainable was achieved through the united front of the **G77 and China**, reinforced by the decisive leadership of the Brazilian Presidency. Equally crucial were the tireless efforts of civil society organizations, whose persistent pressure compelled developed countries, long resistant to the idea, to finally accept the creation of the mechanism.

The closing plenary, which was convened afternoon of 22 November, saw the **G77 and China** and **constituencies**, representing non-governmental organisations, celebrate with loud applause, the [adopted decision](#) that will establish the Just Transitions Mechanism. (For more information on the closing plenary, please see [TWN Belém Update 13](#))

Until the final hours of the climate talks, there was uncertainty whether an agreement would be reached, owing to the opposition from developed countries. Therefore, agreement to develop the mechanism was viewed as a significant step forward in advancing the work of the Just

Transition Work Programme (JTWP), particularly as the work programme is scheduled for review and its continuation will be considered next year, in 2026. (For background, please see [TWN Belém Update 4](#))

A major point of contention in Belém was on how the concerns of developing countries regarding unilateral trade measures (UTMs), including cross-border adjustment mechanisms (CBAMs), should be addressed within the JTWP. There was no consensus to include this issue in the final decision. It was however addressed in the [Global Mutirão: Uniting humanity in a global mobilization against climate change](#) decision.

The final JTWP decision also saw a compromised list of 22 key messages from the 4 dialogues held under the programme, [with a chapeau noting their non-exhaustive nature], and invited Parties and non-Party stakeholders to consider them when designing and supporting just transition pathways in line with national circumstances, priorities and capabilities, as applicable. (See below for further details)

With respect to the review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the work programme and the consideration of its continuation in November 2026, Parties agreed to request "*the subsidiary*

bodies to develop terms of reference for the review at their sixty-fourth sessions” (which is June 2026) and “also requests the subsidiary bodies to consider, inter alia, ways to improve existing modalities in developing the terms of reference...without prejudice to the outcome of the consideration of the continuation of the work programme.”

THE JUST TRANSITION MECHANISM [JTM]

The [adopted decision](#) states that Parties agree “to develop a just transition mechanism” and “the purpose of which will be to enhance international cooperation, technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing, and enable equitable, inclusive just transitions”. The decision also notes that the new “mechanism is to be implemented in a manner that builds on and complements relevant workstreams under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, including the work programme”.

In terms of timeline, Parties agreed that the “subsidiary bodies at their sixty-fourth sessions (June 2026) to recommend a draft decision on the process for its operationalization for consideration by the CMA at its eighth session (November 2026).”

The decision, “in the spirit of *mutirão*”, also invites Parties and non-Party stakeholders to submit their views on the process for the development and operationalisation of the mechanism by 15 March 2026.

During the negotiations in Belem, the **G77 and China** proposed the establishment of the JTM. However, due to disagreement from developed countries, sources informed TWN that the language “develop a just transition mechanism” was presented as a possible landing zone, as part of the delicate balance of the overall texts.

[The **European Union (EU)** first proposed a Just Transition Action Plan (JTAP) as an alternative to the **G77 and China**’s JTM, during the contact group meeting on 14 Nov. The **United Kingdom (UK)** expressed its support for the JTAP during the third high level ministerial roundtable dialogue held on 20 November. The other developed countries, by and large, maintained their earlier positions on either improving existing modalities, developing a policy toolbox or mapping all existing initiatives on just transition. (Further details on the third high level ministerial roundtable dialogue are provided below)]

In the adopted decision, Parties also agreed to request “the secretariat to map relevant instruments, initiatives and processes under the Convention and the Paris Agreement and relevant entities in the United Nations system to support the implementation of the work programme and as input to the review...and also requests the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report...”

On means of implementation and international cooperation, the adopted decision highlighted the following:

- “Recognises the need for enhanced support to be provided to developing country Parties for developing and implementing nationally determined contributions [NDCs], national adaptation plans [NAPs] and long-term low-emission development strategies that incorporate consideration of just transition pathways...”;
- “Emphasizes that means of implementation, including capacity-building, climate finance, and technology development and transfer, as well as enhanced international cooperation, are essential to facilitating the pursuit of just transition pathways that promote sustainable development and poverty eradication in developing country Parties, while noting that high debt burdens and limited fiscal space may hinder such efforts”;
- “Recalls that scaling up new and additional grant-based, highly concessional finance and non-debt instruments remains critical to supporting developing countries, particularly as they transition in a just and equitable manner”;
- “Acknowledges that developing country Parties may lack the institutional and financial capacity to achieve just transitions on their own and that global partnerships and capacity-building initiatives can provide valuable contributions in this context and recognizes that the work programme has the potential to promote and enhance the role of international cooperation and partnerships in relation to the provision of capacity-building and technical and financial assistance.”

ON UNILATERAL TRADE MEASURES (UTMS)

Another contentious issue in Belém regarding JTWP is on how the concerns of developing countries with unilateral trade measures (UTMs), including the cross-border adjustment mechanisms (CBAMs), would be addressed within the work programme.

The JTWP was supposed to deal with this issue and since the matter was being dealt with under the Mutirão decision, there was no need for the JTWP outcome to deal with it. In the [Global Mutirão](#) decision, para 56 *“Reaffirms that Parties should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all Parties, particularly developing country Parties, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change and also reaffirms that measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.”*

While para 57 *“Requests the subsidiary bodies to hold a dialogue at their sixty-fourth [June 2026], sixty-sixth (June 2027) and sixty-eighth sessions (June 2028), with the participation of Parties and other stakeholders, including the International Trade Centre, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization, to consider opportunities, challenges and barriers in relation to enhancing international cooperation related to the role of trade, taking into account paragraph 56 above, decides to exchange experiences and views on related matters at a high-level event in 2028 and requests the subsidiary bodies to present a report summarizing the discussions at the high-level event.”*

HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME OF THE OTHER MAIN ASPECTS OF THE ADOPTED DECISION

Regarding the high-level messages emerging from the four JTWP dialogues, there were divergences among Parties, between those prioritising calls for increased mitigation ambition and a fossil fuel phase-out (such as the **UK, EU, Environmental Integrity Group (EIG), New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Independent Alliance of Latin American and the Caribbean Nations (AILAC),**

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and those emphasising the aspect of international cooperation, means of implementation, and the right to development (including **African Group, the Like-minded developing countries (LMDC), Arab Group, and Least Developed Countries, (LDCs).**

The final decision presented a compromised list of 22 key messages, introduced with a chapeau stating “recognizes the following [key messages], on a non-exhaustive basis,” and is accompanied by a paragraph inviting *“Parties and non-Party stakeholders to consider the key messages ...in designing, implementing and supporting just transition pathways in line with national circumstances, priorities and capabilities, as applicable”*.

Concerning the most controversial paragraph that links energy access and clean cooking fuels with transitioning away from fossil fuels, the final adopted text reads, *“The importance of facilitating universal access to clean, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy for all, including through the scaled-up deployment of renewable energy and access to clean cooking, and that such efforts may promote energy security, while acknowledging that pathways to energy transitions will vary by country in accordance with national circumstances.”* (For background on the controversial para in Bonn, please see [TWN Bonn Update 11](#)).

Another key message is on *“the importance of just transition pathways that respect, promote and fulfil all human rights and labour rights, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the right to health, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations, and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity”*.

The final agreed text saw the change from the earlier reference of “human rights approaches” to “promote and fulfil all human rights and labour rights”. This was a concern repeatedly raised by **Cuba**, saying that the phrase “human rights approaches” “is not a recognised in the intergovernmental process as concept in the

Human Rights Council” and that “there is no UN General Assembly resolution that defines this...[and that] it is a controversial concept”. It was willing to work with Parties as there are many agreed human rights language” added Cuba further.

Some other key and significant messages, as reflected in paragraph 12 of the adopted decision, include:

- *“That the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities should guide just transition efforts”;*
- *“The importance of ensuring broad and meaningful participation involving all relevant stakeholders, including workers affected by transitions, informal workers, people in vulnerable situations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, migrants and internally displaced persons, people of African descent, women, children, youth, elderly people and persons with disabilities, to enable effective, inclusive and participatory just transition pathways”;*
- *“The importance of education systems and skills development, including through upskilling and reskilling that respond to labour market needs, of labour rights and social protection systems, and of consideration of the informal sector, the care economy, unemployed people and future workers for ensuring just transitions”;*
- *“The importance of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and of obtaining their free, prior and informed consent in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the importance of ensuring that all just transition pathways respect and promote the internationally recognized collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the rights to self-determination, and acknowledge the rights and protections for Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact, in accordance with relevant international human rights instruments and principles”;*
- *“The importance of participatory approaches and of involving affected communities in the development of adaptation measures, noting that affected communities must also be central to the design and implementation of adaptation and climate resilience measures in the context of just transition pathways and that one-size-fits-all solutions should be avoided”;*
- *“The connection between just transition pathways and ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, including through the use of ecosystem-based adaptation approaches”;*
- *“That universal, affordable and reliable energy access can be central to nationally defined just transition pathways, particularly in addressing energy poverty”;*
- *“The need for scaling up access to clean cooking, highlighting the many co-benefits of clean cooking in terms of, inter alia, health, gender equality, the environment and livelihoods”;*
- *“That energy transitions towards low-carbon economies may include socioeconomic risks and opportunities, noting the role of nationally determined just energy transition pathways in minimizing risks and maximizing opportunities associated with these transitions”*
- *“The need to address barriers, including limited institutional capacity, implementation gaps, and financial and technical constraints faced by developing country Parties in the context of just transitions”;*
- *“The importance of strengthening international cooperation on mobilizing finance, technology and capacity-building support for facilitating the implementation of nationally determined just transitions in a socially inclusive and equitable manner”;*
- *“The importance of continued efforts to support just transitions through measures*

that avoid exacerbating debt burdens and create fiscal space for countries to advance on pathways towards low emissions and climate-resilient development”

Further, the decision also “underscores that relevant instruments and initiatives may provide elements for consideration in designing and implementing nationally determined just transition pathways, including the International Labour Organization guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and calls upon partners in relevant initiatives and organizations outside the UNFCCC process to take into account the key messages from the work programme in their implementation efforts.”

These messages were viewed as being very

significant, especially by civil society groups.

THIRD ANNUAL HIGH LEVEL MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE ON JUST TRANSITION

Meanwhile, the ‘Third Annual High Level Ministerial Roundtable on Just Transition’, Co-chaired by Minister **Alicia Bárcena Ibarra** of **Mexico** and Minister **Krzysztof Bolesła** of **Poland**, took place on 20 Nov 20.

The roundtable saw strong and united calls from all developing countries and NGO constituencies for the establishment of a JT mechanism, while the **EU’s** proposal on a JT Action Plan was supported by the **UK** and other **EU** member states. Many Parties reiterated their previous positions on the key messages and views on the institutional arrangements.