

Draft Work Plan for 2023-2024

1. The Task Force on Just Transition (hereafter Task Force) operating under the UNECE Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition recognizes that:

(a) To align with climate objectives, countries have to undergo a process of decarbonization of their economies;

(b) Decarbonization includes a need to modernize the energy sector;

(c) Decarbonization will create new opportunities, but it will also entail certain disruptive effects, which are likely to fall disproportionately on the shoulders of the communities that are economically reliant on energy-intensive industries;

(d) It is the duty of the governments, but also of the organizations such as the United Nations to make sure that no one is left behind and the transition is equitable and just for all;

(e) A “just transition” is an integrated approach to sustainable development that brings together social progress, workers’ protection, environmental consciousness, and economic success into a framework of democratic governance and institutional support;

i. *Social progress* means that the process of transition aims to improve well-being of the people that are subject to it, taken both: individually, and as a community, through actions that at times might involve a risk of failure, as they are to be innovative, exploratory, and experimental, thus providing a basis for gathering experiences, learning, and developing good practices ensuring effectiveness of the adopted solutions;

ii. *Workers’ protection and empowerment* means that the transition towards the green economy cannot be delivered at the expense of the work force of legacy industries and enterprises constituting their ecosystem, and that the effective mechanisms for retraining and providing support in finding new economic opportunities, as well as providing social security in case of unemployment are put in place and well-functioning.

iii. *Environmental consciousness and responsibility* indicate that just transition can be based only on such transformative mechanisms and measures that improve the quality of the natural environment and are aligned with the States’ commitments expressed in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other relevant international agreements designed to fight climate change;

iv. *Economic success* is perceived as an improved economic situation for communities which have undergone the transition, as compared to the situation prior to the transition process;

v. *Participatory governance* means that people subject to transition are actively consulted and engaged through social dialogue and other means in co-designing and implementing transition strategies, and that their opinions, concerns, and aspirations are heard and taken under consideration to the extent that warrants their ownership of the process and sense of responsibility for its results;

vi. *Institutional support* refers to the existence or establishment of competent institutions with sufficient agency, resources, and capability to design, prepare for, and implement transition and the necessary supporting mechanisms. These institutions, acting in accordance with the above-mentioned principles, must be able to adapt the process to the changing needs and circumstances as necessary, and ensure that commitments and promises made throughout the process are kept;

(f) Rather than presenting the affected communities and entities with any preconceived solutions, effective “just transition” strategies should be developed on the basis of local, bottom-up engagement with all stakeholders and include commitment by the governments to guarantee their buy-in and provide planning security;

(g) Energy transformation has more than two dimensions of technology and finance; to succeed it must be also socially sensitive and acceptable to the community;

(h) The concept of “just transition” is an essential social and economic component of energy transformation, which is predicated on sensitivity to social issues and community norms, which is a condition for sustainability of its results;

(i) For a true public engagement it is not enough to listen to people and to get them involved in the decision-making; what is necessary is to recognize and respond also to those needs that are oftentimes not clearly articulated, but which significantly add to people’s fear of the upcoming transformation; those needs are related to people’s sense of identity and belonging to a given community, and to adherence to a given culture and heritage;

(j) Coal mining has a rich heritage rooted in a particular customs and identity and as such should be protected, for it constitutes a testimony of human history and is a living proof of our cultural diversity; the fact that the aspects of the coal and steel-based “world” which gave rise to that culture are changing does not mean that the culture itself is not worth preserving;

(k) The challenge is to offer people a different life which would enable them to retain their sense of identity and culture along with having pride and a sense of material security through economic and social opportunities.

(l) A comprehensive system-wide strategy encompassing all aspects (social, economic, technological, and environmental) is necessary, as is also inter- and cross-regional dialogue allowing for an exchange of experience and lessons learnt;

i. Without such approach, undertaken projects will be developed in silos and will not form a coordinated strategy to allow the change of economic profile of a given coal mining area;

ii. Only with a comprehensive, reliable data-driven strategy will the coal mining areas in transition be able to precisely identify their needs and thus request particular and detailed help from aid providers and donors.

2. Guided by the above convictions, and taking into account the mandate and the 2022-2023 and 2024-2025 Work Plans of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition, the Task Force proposes to undertake the following activities in 2024 and 2025:

A. Map the progress of Just Transition in the ECE Region

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Review of the existing literature and resources on Just Transition
- (b) Map the location of the active coal mining areas across the ECE region and collect information allowing to analyse their current conditions at the national, regional, and community level;
- (c) Identify factors that allow the TF to assess countries' readiness for green and just transition of their local active coal mining areas.

Deliverables:

- (a) An online library of resources on Just Transition;
- (b) A map indicating location of the active coal mining areas across the ECE region;
- (c) A document that enumerates and describes the set of factors that allow the Task Force to assess countries' readiness for green and just transition of their local active coal mining areas.

B. Identify the existing guiding principles and good practices in Just Transition

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Analyse the already undertaken transition steps in the selected active coal mining areas;
- (b) Facilitate the dialogue on Just Transition and sharing of lessons learned;
- (c) Compile and compare the obtained results and identify the existing lessons learnt, including guiding principles and good practices, as well as the most commonly repeated mistakes (ineffective or misguided practices, or failure to take the measures necessary) in Just Transition.

Deliverables:

- (a) Develop the criteria for guiding principles and good practices (this work is to be done in parallel with section A);
- (b) A set of the existing lessons learnt, including guiding principles and good practices in Just Transition and a check list of the right questions to ask while preparing to engage in the transition process, as well as a list of the most commonly repeated mistakes (ineffective or misguided practices) and omissions.

C. Provide guidance on the Just Transition's next steps

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Based on the results of activities A and B, provide the selected coal mining areas with recommendations on the next steps that are needed to progress the local process of just transition.

Deliverables:

- (a) Guidelines on next steps that are to be taken by the selected coal mining areas to progress the local process of just transition.

D. Develop pathways for implementation of the developed just transition strategies

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Based on the results of activity C, provide the selected coal mining areas with practical guidelines/scenarios for implementation of the recommended next steps/strategies.

Deliverables:

- (a) Practical guidelines/scenarios for implementation of the recommended next steps/strategies.

E. Develop a principles-based framework for just transition

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Based on the results of activities A, B, and C develop a principles-based framework for just transition of the active coal mining areas.

Deliverables:

- (a) A principles-based framework for just transition of the active coal mining areas.

F. Develop a proposal for a pilot project allowing to test applicability of the proposed principles-based framework to the selected coal mining area and to evaluate the results that its application will lead to

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Develop a case-specific project proposal for a pilot project allowing to test applicability of the proposed principles-based framework to the selected coal mining area.

Deliverables:

- (a) A case-specific project proposal for a pilot project allowing to test applicability of the proposed principles-based framework to the selected coal mining area.

G. Working with other Task Forces on areas of synergy

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Identify synergies with other Task Forces operating under the umbrella of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition.

Deliverables:

- (a) Established working engagement with other Task Forces operating under the umbrella of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition ensuring that the subjects of common interest are addressed jointly and in a coordinated manner.
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