

▶ SS exchange with youth negotiators on decent work, climate change, and just transition

COP28 was a milestone moment for many reasons, and experts and commentators were fast to call it historic and the “beginning of the end for fossil fuels”. This may create concerns amongst countries highly dependent on fossil fuels for their electricity supply or government revenues, but the joint ILO and IsDB report shows that the Middle East and North Africa region could in fact gain jobs and economic growth from ambitious decarbonization pathways.

Contrary to common belief, countries with a high dependency on oil and gas would be the biggest winners in a strong industrial policy scenario. This transition not only mitigates the adverse effects of climate change but also offers avenues for economic diversification and resilience, reducing the region's dependence on fossil fuels and enhancing food and water security through innovative, sustainable practices. In fact, strong industrial and climate development policies would lead to almost 10 million new jobs and accelerate GDP to 7.2 per cent and employment to 5.3 per cent in less than three decades. However, in the absence of enhanced industrial, climate and just transition policies, these countries may also be the most negatively impacted in terms of GDP and job losses. This simply underlines the need for further planning and investing in social justice and decent work in conjuncture with climate technologies to ensure no people nor countries are left behind.

Just transition is a holistic approach to climate action

A just transition involves maximizing the social and economic opportunities of climate action, while minimizing and carefully managing any challenges and is a holistic all of society approach. The ILO *Just Transition Guidelines towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* (2015) outline 9 policy areas for governments, workers' and employers' organisations to work on just that – managing the green transition in a way as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.

This online exchange amongst the ILO Regional Just Transition Specialist in the Arab States and Youth Negotiators and delegates from the Arab States region will focus on key elements of climate change, decent work, and just transition within the context of the UNFCCC climate change negotiations.

Draft agenda

September 12, 2024 12.00-13.00 (Beirut Time)

12.00-12.10	Welcome and introductions, Amera Al-Adba, Emerging & South-South Partnerships Relations Office, ILO
12.10-12.40	Presentation on climate change, decent work, and just transition in the context of UNFCCC by Mette Lund, Regional Just Transition Specialist, ILO
12.40-12.50	Discussions and exchange on just transition priorities across the countries and youth negotiator tracks, Amera Al-Adba, Emerging & South-South Partnerships Relations Office, ILO
12.50-13.00	Wrap up and other ILO engagements at COP29 and on just transition in the region by Mette Lund, Regional Just Transition Specialist, ILO

Summary for the website

ILO hosts South-South Dialogue with Young Climate Negotiators from Arab States on Just Transition and Decent Work



Beirut, September 12, 2024 – To mark the South-South day on the 12th of September, The International Labour Organization (ILO) facilitated a South-South dialogue, bringing together young climate negotiators from Yemen, Lebanon, and Jordan who are currently undergoing a training programme led by the Climate Youth Negotiator Programme (CYNP) in advance of COP29. The session was an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities of achieving a just transition in the region. The virtual exchange focused on key elements of climate adaptation, mitigation, and decent work within the Arab States region, with a particular emphasis on the experiences and lessons shared by each country. The discussions highlighted the crucial role of youth in shaping climate policy and driving the transition toward sustainable, resilient economies.

After a capacity building session on the key principles of a just transition, the session was an opportunity for the negotiators to share their reflections on how decent work is impacted by climate mitigation and adaptation. For example, participants raised concerns about the impacts of climate change on workers in the agricultural sector, where extreme weather poses risks for outdoor laborers. They also addressed the decent work challenges in e-waste and waste management sectors including informality, child labour, and unsafe and unhealthy environments, calling for improved working conditions and decent work opportunities. Likewise, a common challenge across the region, was the transitioning from informal bus services to public electric bus systems, noting the resistance from informal workers but also recognizing the benefits of formalizing jobs and improving working

conditions for bus drivers. Ensuring social dialogue, the involvement of the informal sector, and building social consensus for the transition would be important to not halt the transition in the transportation sector.

Another recurrent topic across the region were issues of rising sea levels and changing weather patterns. For example, in Yemen, seasonal crises such as floods and coastal waves are major threats to sustainable development in the country, and the participants discussed the need of accessing climate technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, they also saw the need for skilling and upskilling to implement the new technologies. Other examples of just transition opportunities included a collaboration between the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Education in Lebanon to develop climate curriculars, to build the capacity and understanding of climate change issues across the education system.

The ILO emphasized the importance of aligning climate action with social justice and economic development through a just transition. According to ILO reports, the Middle East and North Africa region stands to benefit significantly from decarbonization, with the potential to create nearly 10 million jobs in the coming decades, provided that strong industrial and climate policies are implemented.

The event concluded with a call for continued collaboration and engagement on climate issues, particularly around just transition, to ensure that no workers or countries are left behind in the global shift towards sustainability. The ILO reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Arab States in developing policies that maximize the social and economic benefits of climate action while safeguarding decent work.

For more information about the ILO's work on just transition and climate change, visit www.ilo.org.