

Submission by the Stockholm Environment Institute on behalf of the Adaptation Without Borders global partnership, relating to the work programme on just transition pathways

14 September 2023

Introduction

1. The Stockholm Environment Institute is grateful for the opportunity to share its views and those of the Adaptation Without Borders global partnership on elements of the work programme on just transition pathways referred to in paragraph 52 of decision 1/CMA.4. To date, just transitions have been discussed primarily in the context of decarbonisation. This submission makes the case for broadening the discussion to include adaptation and build on the emerging concept of just resilience.

2. Justice in the context of adaptation has long been interpreted to mean that, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, industrialised countries must provide climate finance and other support for adaptation in developing countries. The inadequacy of adaptation finance flows to date has hindered progress on other adaptation-related items on the UNFCCC agenda. By focusing just transition efforts on people, not countries, and explicitly framing adaptation as a global challenge (consistent with Article 7.2 of the Paris Agreement), it may be possible to move beyond the divisive challenges that have previously stymied adaptation negotiations.

Towards just resilience

3. Similar to mitigation, adaptation can lead to unequal and unjust outcomes for people. Pioneering research by Atteridge and Remling (2018) revealed that adaptation actions sometimes redistribute climate risk rather than reduce it. Such unintended consequences often affect people and places with the lowest levels of wealth and resilience, who have little capacity to manage the added burden of imposed, redistributed climate risk. Ensuring that adaptation is just and equitable requires recognising the global interconnectedness of our economic, social and biophysical systems, and the pathways along which risk and vulnerability travel.

4. In a globalising world, countries' economies and the resources on which they depend are connected through trade, financial flows, the movement of people, and shared biophysical systems such as river basins. That means that shocks or stresses in one country can be felt, and sometimes made worse, in other countries thousands of kilometres away. A cornerstone of just transition is that climate action in one place or by one actor should not come at the expense of vulnerable people and communities elsewhere.

5. Aware of the risk that adaptation could create winners and losers, the EU Adaptation Strategy of 2021 introduced the term 'just resilience' as a guiding vision of how adaptation to climate change should take place. It indicates that we should not just protect ourselves against the impact of climate change, but that we should do so justly. The aspiration for just resilience extends beyond Europe. This

is because – as the EU Adaptation Strategy itself notes – the EU and the rest of the world are inescapably intertwined.

6. Recent work conducted in the EU and elsewhere on just resilience could inform a strong component on adaptation under the work programme on just transition pathways. This component could consist of a technical element, aimed at understanding the nature and implications of just transitions for adaptation planning and implementation, and a support element, aimed at strengthening capacity and mobilising finance to support just resilience in developing countries.

Relevant materials

7. We offer for your consideration the following publications that shed light on the concept of just resilience and its relevance in an interconnected, globalising world.

8. First, the policy brief ‘**A just transition for climate change adaptation: towards just resilience and security in a globalising world**’ (Lager *et al.*, 2021) proposes a framework for a just transition for adaptation, focused on two dimensions: justice – procedural and distributional – and connectedness. Achieving globally just resilience requires addressing both dimensions together, but neither is all-or-nothing: incremental steps can make adaptation more globally just over time.

9. A just transition for adaptation is crucial to ensuring both human well-being and countries’ security, as resource scarcity and other stresses caused by climate change or by maladaptation can exacerbate conflict and even indirectly fuel violence. The policy brief recommends that policymakers strengthen multilateral cooperation for globally just resilience; develop agreed principles to move from ambition to action; craft incentives to invest in just transitions for adaptation; and advance research to support decision-making.

10. Second, the report ‘**Just resilience for Europe: towards measuring justice in climate change adaptation**’ (Lager *et al.*, 2023) contributes to making just resilience operational by stocktaking and structuring the knowledge on just resilience in climate adaptation. The report, prepared for the European Environment Agency, aims to provide relevant information towards measuring progress on just resilience in the European context, including the identification of potential indicators.

11. Third, two publications prepared for the United Nations Global Compact consider just transitions within the context of adaptation and resilient supply chains. Both publications are targeted at the private sector. The first one, ‘**Just transition for climate adaptation: a business brief**’ (Dzebo *et al.*, 2022) highlights the important role of adaptation for large multinational corporations that aim to achieve a just transition. Focusing on how businesses can adapt to minimise climate risks and impacts in a just and equitable manner, it presents recommendations for businesses to advance a just transition for climate adaptation.

12. The second publication for UN Global Compact, ‘**Just transition in supply chains: a business brief**’ (Mikaelsson *et al.*, 2023) argues that in the face of growing climate risk, companies that integrate environmental, economic and social impact governance in their supply chains will be more resilient and better positioned to manage the climate change risks and the impacts of advancing a just transition to net-zero and environmentally sustainable economies. It describes how companies can

better manage the convergence of different climate risks to which they are exposed through their supply chains by placing just transition at the centre of their transition planning and risk management strategies, and making it a key pillar of overall business management.

Next steps

13. The Stockholm Environment Institute, on behalf of the Adaptation Without Borders global partnership, encourages the UNFCCC secretariat to highlight in its synthesis report on Parties' and observers' submissions the importance of just transition pathways for adaptation as well as for mitigation. The emerging concept of just resilience holds considerable relevance in shaping these pathways, especially within the context of transboundary climate risks. We also encourage the secretariat, under the guidance of the chairs of the subsidiary bodies, to include adaptation and just resilience on the agenda of the pre-sessional workshop mentioned in paragraph 44 of the report of the 58th session of the SBI and paragraph 71 of the report of the 58th session of the SBSTA. We confirm our availability to take part in this workshop.

14. Beyond the workshop and the negotiations at CMA5 in the United Arab Emirates, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the chairs of the subsidiary bodies, the UNFCCC secretariat and others the role of adaptation and just resilience in the design and implementation of the work programme on just transition pathways. Please refer to <https://adaptationwithoutborders.org> for more information on Adaptation Without Borders.

Links to resources

'Is adaptation reducing vulnerability or redistributing it?' by Aaron Atteridge and Elise Remling in Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 9(1), e500, January/February 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.500>.

'Forging a climate-resilient Europe: the new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change' by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Climate Action, COM/2021/82 final, Brussels, 24 February 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:82:FIN>.

'The EU adaptation strategy is everybody's cup of coffee' by Richard Klein in EurActiv, 24 February 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/opinion/the-eu-adaptation-strategy-is-everybodys-cup-of-coffee/>.

'A just transition for climate change adaptation: towards just resilience and security in a globalising world' by Frida Lager, Kevin Adams, Adis Dzebo, Mats Eriksson, Richard Klein and Martina Klimes, Adaptation Without Borders Policy Brief 2, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden, 31 March 2021, <https://adaptationwithoutborders.org/knowledge-base/adaptation-without-borders/a-just-transition-for-climate-change-adaptation-towards-just-resilience-and-security-in-a-globalising-world>.

'Just transition for climate adaptation: a business brief' by Adis Dzebo, Frida Lager and Richard Klein, UN Global Compact, New York, 10 November 2022, <https://unglobalcompact.org/library/6099>.

‘Just resilience for Europe: towards measuring justice in climate change adaptation’ by Frida Lager, Ingrid Coninx, Margaretha Breil, Inès Bakhtaoui, Anders Branth Pedersen, Kati Mattern, Hanne van den Berg, Eugenio Sini, Giulia Galluccio, Richard Klein and Kati Vierikko, ETC-CA Technical Paper 1/23, European Environment Agency, Copenhagen, 29 May 2023, <https://doi.org/10.25424/CMCC-BATP-3M95>.

‘Just transition in supply chains: a business brief’ by Mikael Allan Mikaelsson, Adis Dzebo and Richard Klein, UN Global Compact, New York, 3 August 2023, <https://unglobalcompact.org/library/6145>.