

## **Submission by the Stockholm Environment Institute relating to the third dialogue under the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme**

*\*This submission draws on evidence from SEI's research and the expertise of SEI's researchers*

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### **Introduction**

1. 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 indirectly fuel violence. It is therefore timely and important that the third dialogue of the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme focuses on adaptation. The Stockholm Environment Institute is grateful for the opportunity to share its views on opportunities, best practices, actionable solutions, challenges and barriers relevant to approaches to enhancing adaptation and climate resilience in the context of just transitions.

2. This submission considers adaptation as a global challenge, consistent with Article 7.2 of the Paris Agreement. It outlines how climate impacts can propagate across countries, and how adaptation responses may create winners and losers. It then presents selected materials that underscore the importance of justice in adaptation and resilience, and how this can be advanced through just transitions in an interconnected world. The submission concludes with suggested next steps and links to relevant resources.

### **Advancing justice in adaptation and 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. These unintended consequences often fall on people and places with the lowest levels of wealth and resilience, who have limited capacity to bear the added burden of redistributed 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. 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. This means that shocks or stresses in one country can be felt, and sometimes amplified, in other countries thousands of kilometres away (Lager *et al.*, 2021). 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. The EU Adaptation Strategy of 2021, *Forging a climate-resilient Europe*, indicates that Europe should not just protect itself against the impact of climate change, but that it should do so justly.

Similarly, the African Union's *Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032)* emphasises equity and justice as core principles for climate resilience, promoting people-centred adaptation, intersectionality, and equitable transitions that ensure no one is left behind.

6. Recent work conducted in Europe and Africa on just resilience could inform the third dialogue of the UAE Just Transition Work Programme. For example, the 'Just Resilience for Europe' framework (Lager *et al.*, 2023) offers practical insights for embedding justice in adaptation planning, including through the principle of 'leaving no one behind'. It emphasises that the most vulnerable people often face the highest climate risks, have the least capacity to adapt, and receive the lowest recognition in policy processes.

7. Both the EU and AU strategies converge around shared commitments to procedural, distributional and recognitional justice, reinforcing the need for multilevel governance and inclusive engagement. Joint reflection on these complementary approaches can help shape a globally resonant framework for the third dialogue under the UAE Just Transition Work Programme. The aspiration for justice in adaptation and resilience extends beyond Europe and Africa, because all parts of the world are inescapably intertwined.

### **Relevant materials**

8. We offer for your consideration the following publications, which shed light on the need for justice in adaptation and resilience, and how it can be advanced through just transitions in an interconnected world.

9. 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 in adaptation, centred on two dimensions: justice – both procedural and distributional – and connectedness. It recommends that policymakers (i) strengthen multilateral cooperation for globally just resilience; (ii) develop agreed principles to move from ambition to action; (iii) craft incentives to invest in just transitions for adaptation; and (iv) 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 existing knowledge on justice in climate adaptation. Prepared for the European Environment Agency, the report offers guidance for tracking progress in the European context, including the identification of potential indicators.

11. Third, two publications prepared for the United Nations Global Compact consider just transitions in the context of adaptation and resilient supply chains. The first, *Just transition for climate adaptation: a business brief* (Dzebo *et al.*, 2022), highlights the important role of adaptation for large multinational companies seeking to advance a just transition. It focuses on how businesses can minimise climate risks and impacts in a just and equitable manner, and presents recommendations to support this goal.

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 into their supply chains will be more resilient. It outlines how businesses can better manage overlapping climate risks by placing just transition at the core of their transition planning and risk management strategies.

### Next steps

13. Based on our research and the observations presented here, the Stockholm Environment Institute encourages the organisers of the third dialogue of the UAE Just Transition Work Programme, under the guidance of the chairs of the subsidiary bodies, to deliver on the following objectives:

- **Explicitly address the international dimensions of adaptation justice.** In particular, we recommend that the dialogue explore how adaptation actions in one region can redistribute risk or create maladaptive spillovers elsewhere, and how these can be avoided through enhanced multilateral cooperation.
- **Explore and inform potential concrete outcomes** from the UAE Just Transition Work Programme that could help advance the integration of fairness and equity in delivering the adaptation-related goals of the Paris Agreement.
- **Provide space for the co-design of adaptation justice indicators** that reflect both procedural and distributive justice across different national and regional contexts, drawing from existing frameworks and strategies.
- **Analyse potential overlaps and synergies with other related agenda items** – such as National Adaptation Plans and the Global Goal on Adaptation – with a view to arriving at operational adaptation and resilience outcomes within the COP30 decision on the UAE Just Transition Work Programme.
- **Guide additional research and work** that can be undertaken, particularly given that adaptation and resilience have received relatively little attention in the context of just transitions.

14. We further recommend that the chairs of the subsidiary bodies structure the process of delivering these objectives through a series of targeted guiding questions, including:

- Where might adaptation efforts unintentionally shift risk, undermining resilience or just transitions in other countries?
- What is the role of international cooperation in addressing climate risks within and between countries to ensure just adaptation?
- What do means of implementation for just adaptation look like?

15. We also confirm our availability to contribute to the dialogue and to serve as thematic experts.

### 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>

‘*Climate change and resilient development strategy and action plan (2022–2032)*’ by African Union, Addis Ababa, 2022. [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41959-doc-CC\\_Strategy\\_and\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2022-2032\\_08\\_02\\_23\\_Single\\_Print\\_Ready.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41959-doc-CC_Strategy_and_Action_Plan_2022-2032_08_02_23_Single_Print_Ready.pdf)

‘*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>

‘*Just resilience*’ by Climate-ADAPT, European Environment Agency, undated. <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/eu-adaptation-policy/key-eu-actions/just-resilience>