

ECOP-FFW Bipartite Declaration on Just Transition

Unmitigated climate change can cost human lives, undermine jobs and enterprises, reduce productivity, and threaten workers' rights and health. Some of the world's regions most affected by climate change are often the least equipped to adapt to its effects. Climate action can generate sustainable growth and employment opportunities and foster social inclusion, but in the absence of coherent policies, it can also pose challenges in terms of job losses, skill mismatches, inequalities, and potential business closures. The risks associated with climate change (CC) such as fiercer typhoons, unprecedented flooding, devastating droughts, rising sea levels are increasingly being felt in the Philippines, one of the five most vulnerable countries to CC in the world per United Nations (UN) environmental data. This is made worse by inadequate responses to disaster, making the Philippines top the World Risk Index for 16 consecutive years.

In 2015, Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted the Paris Agreement and committed to "limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change." Under the same agreement, the Philippines is mandated to submit its commitment to reduce emissions and adapt to CC impacts under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) it has submitted in 2021 and will update next year, under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The Government has the central role of fulfilling its obligations under the Paris Agreement and creating an appropriate policy framework through the agencies in charge such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Energy (DOE), and Climate Change Commission (CCC). However, making the Philippines more sustainable and fully aligned with the UN's response to the global climate emergency requires a coherent and synergized approach to mitigation and adaptation among all actors of society.

Business and labor have a key role to play since they are the main engines of growth and socio-economic development, decent job creation, and depend on a productive and robust labor market to operate the various economic activities. Even workers and employers are also consumers of power and plastics for their household needs and are commuters who stand to benefit from efficient and clean mass transportation systems. Employers and workers need an enabling environment and dedicated policies and regulations that will incentivize and facilitate climate action and espouse climate justice.

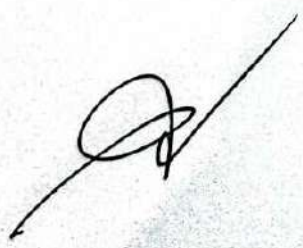
In this context, employers and workers, through their trade unions, have a central role to play in addressing critical tasks related to the national response to the climate emergency such as transforming industries and businesses to be aligned with our vision of a sustainable economy less reliant on dirty energy and yet, creating decent work for all.

Given the foregoing background, we, the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) and the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), supported by the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) and the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA), have joined hands to express our unity in the advocacy and implementation of a Just Transition Program that is aligned with the Paris Agreement and the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) established in COP 28, the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In line with this, we hereby declare our united support and commitment to the following:

A. Addressing the Gaps

The transition from a fossil-fuel driven to a low carbon economy that is sustainable and environmentally sound requires a strong commitment from all sectors of society. There is a need for policy coherence – in economic, social, labor, and environmental spheres – to make just transition possible.



There is a need to review the Green Jobs Act of 2016, Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-28, and the Labor and Employment Plan (LEP) 2023-28 to ensure that just transition principles are integrated in these. Promoting a just transition is a crucial enabler of sustainable development and climate ambition and needs to be placed at the center of climate action. Just transition involves maximizing the social and economic opportunities of climate and environmental action, including an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises and decent work, while minimizing and carefully managing challenges. The complexity of a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all is also compounded by the implications of technological change and demographic shifts.

At the industry and enterprise level, there is a need to also assess the shift to a green economy that leads to the creation of green jobs. A true green job is not merely a result of the company's adoption of green technology or a shift to a green process. A true green job must integrate safety and health into the design, procurement, operations, use and maintenance, and adoption of clean and re-cycling processes and adheres to decent work standards. These must be integrated into the human resource development programs jointly developed by employers and workers. Greening plans must also give importance to the preservation and creation of jobs, especially for those affected by any planned adoption of green technology. Finally, transition policies need to take into account the priorities and challenges of access to technology and access to finance of enterprises of all sizes, particularly SMEs.

Furthermore, at the industry and enterprise levels, employers and workers should be able to decide how greening can be done at each level. Special attention should be given to the two major climate change responses identified by the UN Environment Programme: mitigation and adaptation.

Additionally, employers and workers should take a closer look at the guidelines outlined by the UN in the 17 SDGs. Of utmost relevance to industry and labor are SDG 8 (on decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (on sustainable industrialization and infrastructure development), and SDG 13 (on climate action).

B. The Road to Just Transition

Just transition does not happen in an instance. For just transition to work, it requires investment in resources, time, and commitment from all social partners. Haphazardly done, CC programs can become unjust and can cause social and economic conflicts.

The ILO came out in 2015 with the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition that social partners can and must observe. There are important guidelines that are worth remembering, namely:

1. There should be adherence to the overall concept of "sustainable development", as defined by the Brundtland Commission Report: meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations.
 2. Social inclusion, meaning no one excluded or left behind – social partners, communities, and sectors affected by the impacts of CC should be included in the design, implementation, and monitoring of just transition programs.
 3. Poverty reduction. Just transition programs should result in the creation of more climate-friendly jobs and livelihoods.
 4. Respect and full recognition of rights at work, especially the fundamental principles and rights at work.
 5. Social protection for all, including innovative responses to emerging climate disasters that affect work and livelihoods.
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6. Coherence in addressing economic, social, and environmental issues.

In developing the Just Transition Program of an industry or enterprise, it is critical that genuine, meaningful, and inclusive social dialogue is undertaken.

Commitment to the National Conference on Just Transition Affirmative Action Program

As an expression of our firm unity on how a Just Transition program can make this vision happen, ECOP and FFW have agreed to:

- Form a national bipartite just transition committee and encourage establishment of industry- and enterprise-level bipartite just transition committees;
- Call for genuine representation of workers and employers in any and all just transition structures and/or mechanisms organized by government;
- Explore areas for possible joint activities based on the Workers for Just Transition 13-Point Labor Agenda and ECOP's Sustainability Roadmap;
- Engage with the appropriate government agencies and institutions relating to national policies, laws and programs on Just Transition, the country's NDCs under the Paris Agreement, greening of the PDP, the LEP, and the National Just Transition Work Program, creation of green jobs, the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Act, the CCC, and the country's sustainability targets under the SDGs and AmbisyonNatin 2040; and
- Promote and conduct awareness-raising activities, research, partnerships, capacity-building, training, and services on greening and just transition.

Signed this 3rd day of October 2024 at the B Hotel, Quezon City.


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