

# Social justice enables climate ambition: unions set course for COP26

## ITUC COP26 priorities:



1

### Climate ambition with Just Transition:

raise climate ambition with Just Transition policies and measures in enhanced NDCs.



2

### Human and labour rights:

implement inclusive climate policies that respect and promote human and labour rights.



3

### Climate finance:

provide climate finance to decarbonise the Global South.



4

### Industry policy and investment:

implement strong industrial policies and investment plans underpinning the transition to zero-emission economies.

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# 1. Social justice to stabilise the planet and a New Social Contract

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## Introduction by Sharan Burrow

As the impact of climate change is felt on a global scale, it is clear that current policy commitments are not enough to break with the dominant production and consumption models in order to drive the transition to a zero-carbon economy. Despite efforts by trade unions and environmental and social movements insisting on addressing justice and climate ambition, more action is needed to avert the catastrophic consequences of climate change.

The commitments of leaders to emission reductions by 2030 and to climate neutrality and net-zero emissions by 2050 not only fall short of moderating temperature rises to 1.5 degrees but are not yet supported by effective policy measures to deliver them.

## **It is *now* that we need ambitious plans, not *tomorrow*.**

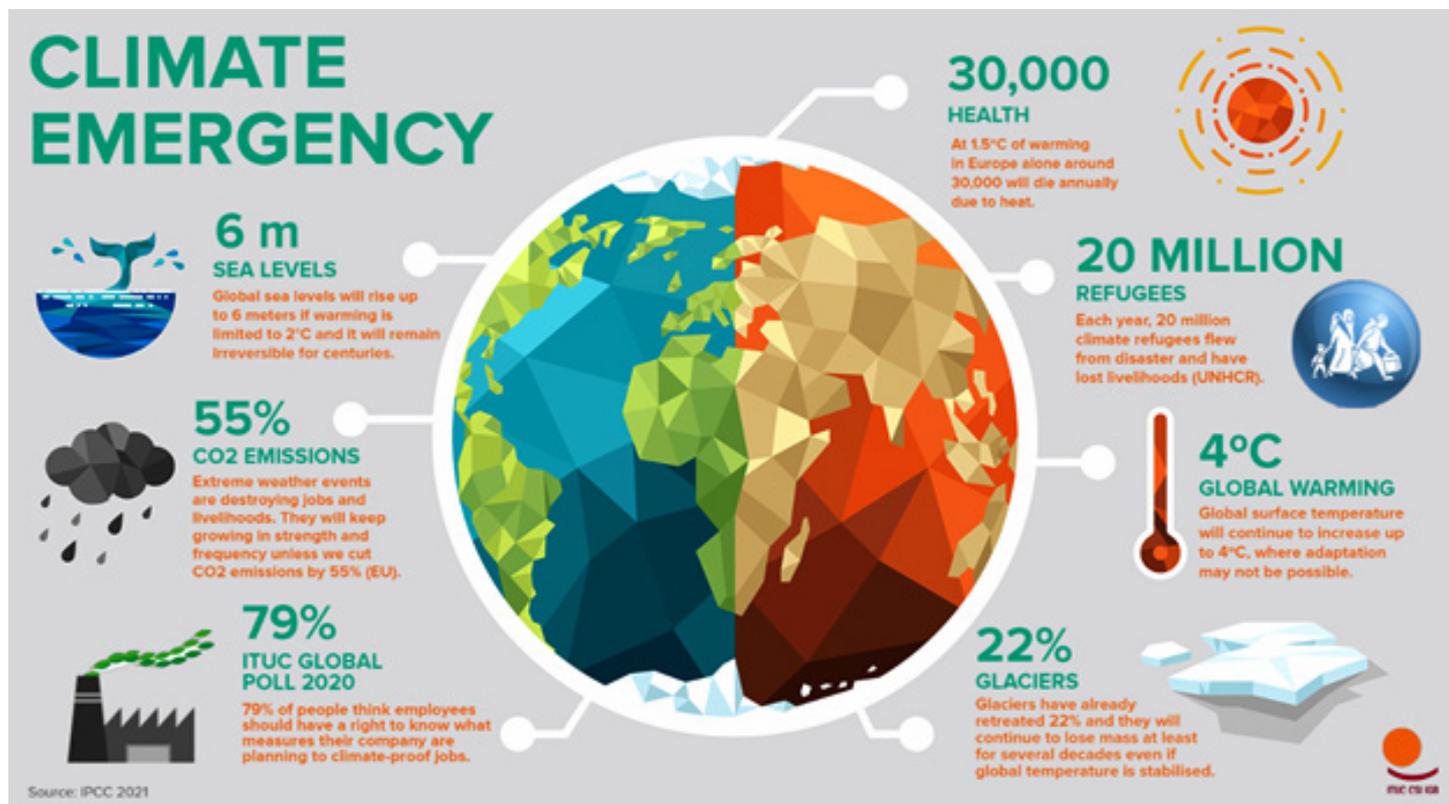
Scientists are observing changes in the Earth's climate in every region and across the whole climate system, according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report. Many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes already set in motion – such as continued sea level rise – are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years.

However, strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change. While benefits for air quality would come quickly, it could take 20-30 years to see global temperatures stabilise, according to the IPCC Working Group I report, *Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis*.<sup>1</sup> The report shows that emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are responsible for approximately 1.1°C of warming since 1850-1900, and finds that averaged over the next 20 years, global temperature is expected to reach or exceed 1.5°C of warming. For 1.5°C of global warming, there will be increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons. At 2°C of global warming, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>

## The impact of climate change if left unabated.



The increasing impact of climate change is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable people. Lives, livelihoods, health, and the quality of life and of work were under threat prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is no doubt that resilience has been further eroded. Without investment in jobs, Just Transition and universal social protection, the world's people will only be at greater risk.

The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that we need to take much better care of nature. The devastating spread of zoonotic diseases was made possible by the devastation of our biodiversity and by industrial agriculture practises. The pandemic has shown that we need to tackle the closely linked crises of inequality, biodiversity devastation and climate change in a coherent way. Integrating biodiversity protection will be crucial if we are serious about avoiding the same mistakes that led to the global pandemic.

**Without 'social justice' and a New Social Contract, we cannot build trust in the vital industrial transition critical to stabilise the planet.**

The global labour movement has climate policies at the centre of a vision for a fairer, more resilient society for all, reflected in our five demands for a New Social Contract:

- 1. Creation of climate-friendly jobs** with Just Transition. Job-creating industrial transformation plans are needed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions, along with jobs in health, education, care, energy and housing services and other quality public services.
- 2. Rights for all workers**, regardless of their employment arrangements, to fulfil the promise of **social justice** with its labour protection floor including rights, maximum working hours, living minimum wages and health and safety at work.
- 3. Universal social protection** that underpins a Just Transition and builds resilience, and establishment of a Global **social protection system** to build social protection systems for the

poorest countries. Unions are promoting and defending public pension and health systems based on solidarity.

**4. Equality.** End all discrimination due to income, race or gender, to ensure that all people can share in prosperity; the appalling concentration of wealth in the hands of a few at the expense of the many must be undone.

**5. Inclusion and democratic participation.** No one will be left behind. A new economic development model driven by a strong role for the state and a new relationship with private business must ensure inclusion through participatory democracy involving trade unions, communities, local authorities, business associations and all civil society.

## 2. COP26 must guarantee public safety and equitable and effective participation

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### Public safety.

The safety of the participants, people in the UK and in the countries that send participants to the COP is central to the delivery of a successful COP in Glasgow.

### Urgency of negotiations.

The climate emergency does not allow for any further delays in action. The commitments in the Paris Agreement must be turned into real action. The 2021 COP is a critical moment to demand that policymakers are accountable for what they promised and raise ambition.

### Equitable and effective participation.

The UK COP presidency has been slow and untransparent in adapting the organisation of the COP to the needs of people impacted by the COVID pandemic. Any pandemic-motivated decisions to organise the conference in a (partly) digital way need to take into account the equitable participation of all parties and non-party stakeholders and observers. All parties, including the most vulnerable and civil society, should have their rightful voice at the COP. Attention to time zones and communication needs must be considered to make this possible. Transparency and open negotiations will ensure the fairness and ambition of the COP process and outcomes.



# 3. Trade union demands for COP26

The COP26 in Glasgow must deliver on the needs of the world and make major steps forward with implementing ambitious climate policies. 2021 is the year for governments to align climate, economic, social and labour demands. In addition to having the US government back at the table, we need a renewed energy by all governments in multilateral cooperation as the only way to tackle the climate emergency effectively and efficiently.

## 1. Climate ambition with Just Transition: raise climate ambition with Just Transition policies and measures in enhanced NDCs.

Countries must increase their ambition, setting new, stronger NDCs (nationally determined contributions). Many NDCs are falling short of the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The IPCC report is a stark reminder of the urgency to step up ambition. Wealthy countries must substantially increase their climate finance contributions for developing countries in order to enable a change of course. Putting Just Transition at the heart of all climate policies is the only way to raise ambition. Investing in climate action can deliver good jobs and livelihoods for everyone. This requires:

- ALL countries to introduce Just Transition measures and policies in their national climate plans (NDCs) with effective participation of all social actors, including unions, as established by the ILO principles of the Just Transition. Countries that have not renewed their NDC commitments or that have done so without convening effective social dialogue processes with the participation of unions and social movements should consult unions about the approved measures and plans and in the implementation.

- The ILO Just Transition Guidelines continue to be a framework to support governments, social partners and stakeholders in this work. Countries that have included Just Transition measures should implement them, guided by effective social dialogue processes.
- COP26 must recognise that climate justice and social justice are linked through the SDGs. Common but differentiated responsibilities and global solidarity through finance and technology sharing should be backed by universal social protection to build resilience against future global shocks. The pandemic has made this evident, including the ever-growing inequality within and between countries.

Access to finance and technology transfer for developing countries is essential to address climate change. Financing cannot become another form of indebtedness for the countries of the Global South and access to technology a new form of dependency. The commitments of developed countries must be effective and based on dialogue, respecting the autonomy of countries to define their policies. COP26 cannot ignore the systemic flaws of our current economic model, which jeopardises any effective climate policy.

## 2. Human and labour rights: implement inclusive climate policies that respect and promote human and labour rights.

Labour rights are human rights. They are central to our Just Transition demands and need to be integrated in all aspects of the UNFCCC negotiations. Dealing with the climate emergency is an opportunity to create good

and decent jobs. This means that policymakers not only need to talk about the jobs that will be created, but they also need to engage with the organisations that represent workers in order to guarantee that labour rights are respected and decent work opportunities are created. This includes access to training and social protection guarantees for workers whose jobs are negatively impacted by the transition. Employment plans need to be a foundation of climate plans.

The respect and promotion of labour and human rights is particularly relevant for the negotiations on NDCs, Article 6 (dealing with carbon markets and non-market approaches), mitigation, climate finance, loss and damage and on adaptation. All these items should contain explicit reference to the respect of labour and human rights.

The global trade union movement supports the Gender Action Plan, agreed at COP25, which aims to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action. The work of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) also has our support. When taking action to address climate change, the respective obligations on, *inter alia*, the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities should be respected, promoted and considered. In this context, countries are urged to ratify and apply ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

### **3. Climate finance: provide climate finance to change the global development model and decarbonise the Global South.**

At the 2009 Copenhagen climate negotiations, developed nations committed to provide “*scaled up, new and additional, predictable and adequate funding*” to meet “*a goal of mobilizing jointly US\$100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries*”. In December 2020, the Independent Expert Group on Climate Finance, mandated by the UN Secretary-General, concluded that the US\$100 billion goal for climate finance for developing countries will not be met in 2020 (based on currently available data). Significant extra effort by rich countries is needed, and more support needs to go to climate adaptation, as

most finance is currently directed to mitigation projects. Governments need to agree on a comprehensive and effective loss and damage financing instrument. Finally, there is an urgent need to impose strict climate finance criteria that guarantee that financial support is additional and with no strings attached. The tendency to more and more ‘blended’ finance (less grants and more loans) needs to be stopped.

Providing climate finance should focus on changing the production and consumption model, not only on decarbonisation. Mitigation and adaptation are much more than simply decarbonising the economy. All climate financing should be unconditional and must respect democratic principles of self-determination and sovereignty of countries in decision-making. Financing implies access to patents for technologies, knowledge and development processes that are related to confronting climate change. In addition, it implies eliminating trade and investment rules that restrict States from implementing active policies of reindustrialisation, transformation of the productive matrix, energy transition and democratisation.

OECD countries have an unfulfilled commitment to increase the amount of their official development assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of their GDP and all countries committed to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (SDGs). The lack of progress on both issues must be addressed.

### **4. Industry policy and investment: implement strong industrial policies and investment plans underpinning the transition to zero-emission economies.**

Hard-to-abate industry sectors, such as steel, aluminium, cement, chemicals, aviation, shipping and trucking, are responsible for nearly one-third of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These are products and services highly demanded by countries of the Global North that in many cases are strongly associated with extractive processes and with violations of labour and community rights, especially in countries of the Global South. They have a vital role to play in meeting the Paris Agreement objective of limiting global warming to well below 2°C and preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial

levels. Industry transition road maps need to guide the process of decarbonisation in all countries and sectors. Effective social dialogue processes are crucial to helping workers, employers, governments and other stakeholders manage change through the planning and implementation of Just Transition measures. Industrial and investment policies cannot be restricted to zero emission plans. There are mechanisms and measures that are aimed at reducing emissions that reproduce the same inequities in the system and therefore will deepen the social, climate and environmental crisis.

Climate change is on the investor agenda. In 2020, 2,097 investors with US\$97 trillion in assets completed the climate disclosure and reporting criteria of the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI). Other investor initiatives are stepping up pressure on the largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters. Still, public reporting and follow-up to the investor principles to avoid greenwashing and more accountability in general is needed to ensure that all labour rights are respected and all investments are really climate friendly. A global taxonomy for sustainable investments must be implemented. These policies must be accompanied by Just Transition plans and measures by companies and in the sectors involved to create jobs and provide capacity building and skills training. All industry and investment plans should be 100% climate proof.

Governments have to provide a framework for investments in breakthrough technologies such as energy efficiency, renewable energy production, electrification, green hydrogen, batteries and others through support for research, innovation and development. These plans should incorporate a critical and complete evaluation of the life cycle of the projects that includes their compatibility with the environment, aspects related to technology transfer, as well as respect for human and trade union rights and common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), among others.

No industry and investment plans should contain net-zero loopholes. 'Not-zero' plans risk locking in fossil fuel technologies through inappropriate use of CCS (carbon capture and storage), CCU (carbon capture and use) and BECCS (bioenergy with carbon

capture and storage). Negative emission technologies involving carbon capture will be necessary to stabilise the climate. However, they should only be implemented in hard-to-abate sectors and not serve to prolong the life of fossil fuel technologies. (Green) hydrogen technologies should be assessed on their effective contribution to the Paris Agreement climate goals to achieve a climate-neutral world by 2050.

Carbon capture projects should not put additional burdens on countries in the Global South through practices of land grabbing or the privatisation of public spaces for BECCS. The same reservation needs to be applied to 'nature-based solutions' that are implemented as carbon-offsetting projects. Climate actions should in no way worsen the ongoing erosion of biodiversity. The global labour movement welcomes genuine nature-based solutions that combine climate with biodiversity protection (such as mangrove and wetlands restoration), stop deforestation and promote reforestation. These projects are opportunities to create decent, formal, secure, quality green jobs.

## 4. Unions mobilising for climate ambition

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- Track your government's commitments to climate ambition, Just Transition and social dialogue in its enhanced NDC! Demand amendments to NDCs and national plans where there are gaps.
- Organise, organise, organise! Encourage union representatives to speak to members about climate action and Just Transition. Organise company Just Transition plans and make Just Transition collective bargaining agreements at the company, sectoral and national level
- Follow up on the many initiatives that are being presented in the Climate- and Employment-Proof Our Work (CEPOW) plans.
- Establish contacts with your government on the preparation for COP26 and share the trade union demands for COP26.
- Get ready to be part of COP26, with a virtual or physical presence in Glasgow in November 2021.
- Participate at the **“Global Day of Action for Climate Justice”** on **Saturday 6 November**. Decentralised mass mobilisations across the world will bring together movements to build power for system change – from indigenous struggles to trade unions, from racial justice groups to youth strikers. More info on <https://cop26coalition.org/gda/>
- Join the activities of the People's Summit for Climate Justice that runs from 7-10<sup>th</sup> November. You can join online from anywhere in the world, or in-person in Glasgow. More info on <https://cop26coalition.org/peoples-summit/>

## 5. ITUC @ COP26

All trade union members and activists are invited to participate at our “**Trade Union Strategy Day**” organised by the ITUC on **Sunday 7 November** from 9:30 to 17:30 at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. The event will be followed by a reception.

We’ll provide digital access for those that cannot be present in Glasgow. An invitation with the details of the program will be send out later. Be sure you are registered on our ITUC Climate mailing list!

<https://ituc.microsoftcrmportals.com/SC1-ESP-Multi/?lang=EN>.

An overview of our union activities at COP26 in Glasgow can be found at:

[www.tinyurl.com/unions-cop26](http://www.tinyurl.com/unions-cop26)

The programme will be updated as new information becomes available.

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