

Climate Action Network-International

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**CAN-International: ‘Input for Just Transition report’**

**Submission to: UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights**

*Climate Action Network-International (CAN-International) is the world’s largest network of environmental civil society organizations, with more than 1400 members in over 120 countries, working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis.*

Humankind is proud of achieving frontiers in all fields of knowledge, assuming we have reached the highest standards of civilization. However, the several crises humanity is experiencing is not due to a spontaneous junction of *bad luck*. We have been building it up and generating perverse trends by putting greed before solidarity. This needs to change.

Never before have we had the resources, the scientific knowledge and technology we now have to change for good. All the looming crises can be addressed by embracing the kind of multilateralism that delivered us the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948[[1]](#footnote-1). It was the result of a critical time of conflict.

Now, again, this is a transformational moment[[2]](#footnote-2). The decisions made today will shape our societies and economies for years or decades to come. This decade is the same window of time we have left to recover from the current health and economic crises and to take the necessary action to stem the climate crisis and limit warming to below 1.5ºC.

The most vulnerable people already gravely impacted by the climate crisis are at risk of being pushed into further uncertainty and poverty. To minimize the harm of COVID-19, protect people, and ensure long term resilience and prosperity, governments’ reactions must be swift, people-centered and in the spirit of solidarity.

That means focusing on helping workers in all affected industries, but avoiding subsidies or bailouts that would keep or increase heavily polluting activities or infrastructure investments that lock in greenhouse gas emissions for decades to come. And it means understanding and addressing the underlying inequalities that make people especially vulnerable to both climate change and COVID-19.

The response to this pandemic will require a great short and mid-term effort by governments and all stakeholders, it is expected that this intervention will take shape in several waves.

In these stages, the fundamental principles to be observed for a Just Reboot of the economy are the following:

*Immediate*

1. Health is the top priority, for all people, with no exceptions.
2. Provide economic relief directly to the people, small farmers, indigenous peoples and workers
3. Ensure accountability, transparency and democratic principles
4. Protect food security and farmers’ rights
5. Support using public money should only be​ provided on condition that it is linked to social and environmental responsibility:
6. to provide safe and fair working conditions

All stimulus packages must be transparent and implemented in an accountable manner. However, corrupt and anti-democratic administrations around the world are exploiting the Covid-19 crisis to push for non-transparent corporate bailouts and regulatory rollbacks or to limit civic space and democratic liberties permanently. It is critical to scrutinize these measures and make governments accountable for adopting such measures. It is crucial:

* To not use the crisis as an excuse to undermine or violate human rights, civil liberties, and democracy.
* all financial and other support given must be accountable to the people, and information about money spent on which measures and which beneficiary must be publicly available;
* corporate bailouts must be issued under social and environmental safeguards - no-strings-attached bailouts are not acceptable;
* to not roll back environmental regulation protecting people and nature
* That these measures should have a time-limit within a reasonable timeframe

*For a Just economic & social reboot*

1. Create resilience for future crises and build an economy fit for the 21st Century

In moments of crisis and cataclysmic change, the previously unthinkable suddenly becomes reality. The Covid-19 crisis is already shifting our sense of the possible. Now is the time to be far bolder in our demands for something different; for something better. There is no going back to the old “normal”, because “normal” was untenable for billions of people around the world, exacerbated by the climate disaster and which is directly caused by the dependence of fossil fuels in our economies.

COVID-19 and its economic risks are rightfully the forefront of governments’ action today. But as we look to boost the economy, we also need to consider tomorrow. While immediate government responses to ensure liquidity should not bail out dirty industries or at least have conditions attached to ensure rapid decarbonization in line with the Paris Agreement goals, recovery packages and public investment to revive the economy might haven even greater negative lock-in-effects. We can however ​create millions of decent green jobs and contribute to local and regional strengthening of people led initiatives that will help power a just transition for workers, small and medium farmers and communities to a socially inclusive, sustainable, zero-carbon and climate–resilient future global society.

In planning and implementing recovery packages governments must:

* + ensure forward-looking planning and investments shall meet environmental and social standards and build resilient infrastructure systems, sectors and communities, including in particular:
    - energy efficiency
    - renewable energy
    - energy grid development
    - public transport
    - efficient housing taking into account in particular r​educed ecological footprint as well as using materials and services in line with the circular economy.
    - environmentally sustainable and healthy food systems based on principles of agroecology, food sovereignty, and less and better meat.
  + Ensure that equity and a just transition are at the heart of any government response to the current crisis.
  + Evaluate investments against:
    - decent job creation and security of workers, and their participation in the design of a just transition.
    - short- and long-term emission reduction
    - reduction of dependency on fossil fuels and industrial agribusiness
    - their ability to address and reverse inequality,
    - support to smallholder and agroecological farmers, rather than concentrating land and wealth
    - support for strengthening of local and diversified food economies with short, equitable supply chains between food producers and consumers
    - positive lock in effects
    - agroecological practices that benefit people, nature and the climate
    - protection and restoration of biodiverse ecosystems
  + Exclude investments in harmful industries such as fossil fuel infrastructure, additional roads, automobile industries, agribusiness corporations
  + End fossil fuel subsidies and ensure any carbon price reflects climate and equity imperatives
  + introduce oil and gas production caps in line with the ambition of the Paris Agreement
  + “Buy Clean” to prioritize use of the most efficient, resilient and cleanest materials and products with the lowest carbon, ecological and toxicity footprints and “Buy Fair” to enhance labor standards, workers’ rights, career pathways, equity and community benefits;

Increasing resources are required to support those more vulnerable and impacted by climate change, many of whom are also living in extreme poverty. Most Governments usually neglect financing for Adaptation and Loss and Damage.

Vulnerable Countries currently face the dual crises of climate impacts and COVID. Cyclone Harold just devastated the Pacific Islands, disrupted Covid response preparations and left 160.000 people in need of assistance in Vanuatu, alone. Government policies that reduce the vulnerability of poor communities by addressing structural inequality need to be implemented urgently as climate change impacts are becoming much greater. New funding for loss and damage, however, must not cut into funding for adaptation. Action on both adaptation and loss and damage must be informed by the needs of developing countries and the best available science as to how they may be affected in the future. Commitments, plans, and implementation announced in 2020 must put the most vulnerable communities at the heart of adaptation planning and response.

*A just transition is key for this transformation*[[3]](#footnote-3).

Climate change poses existential risks to many sectors and communities. Developing policy responses to fully embrace the opportunities of the transition towards a zero-carbon global economy as well as ensuring no-one is left behind will require a carefully managed just transition for workers and affected communities.

Decision-makers must ensure that they are fully informed and act in the best interest of their citizens, taking a long-term view, and engaging in informed dialogue with those affected. Embracing a fair and fast transition can contribute to achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

Socially inclusive dialogue, responsibly planned and carefully managed policies and strategies, in line with the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030, would achieve significant and lasting impacts

Stimulus money should offer immediate relief directly to workers and provide opportunities for training, education and employment in existing and emerging low-carbon sectors like energy efficiency, technology, healthcare and renewable energy.

*Raising the question, "who pays" for the Economic Stimulus Packages?*

This is a growing request – and not only because of Covid-19. Those who can bear the cost should be. The multilateral financial architecture – the Bretton Woods Institutions – require a long awaited and demanded reform. Besides exploring this reform and national fiscal options on wealth and income distribution, CAN advocates for immediate economic solidarity among countries[[4]](#footnote-4) which:

“Promote debt swaps for health emergency support and environmentally sustainable development - not only for least developed countries, but among all countries in need. It is not only fair for a debt created under - in many cases - obscure negotiations and lack of transparency and accountability. But also, there is a global economic rationale to do it. A six-months moratorium is too short for the health and social challenges created by the Coronavirus disruption, including support for NDC and SDGs targets.”

1. Unfortunately, in part, we can attribute the current state of global challenges to not being able to make the UDRH prevail. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Main content taken from: CAN Position: Fundamentals for Recovery & Economic Stimulus Packages in response to Covid-19, May 2020. <http://www.climatenetwork.org/publication/can-position-fundamentals-recovery-economic-stimulus-packages-response-covid-19-may-2020> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. These text mostly come from: <http://www.climatenetwork.org/sites/default/files/can_g20_brief_2018_just_transition_1.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.climatenetwork.org/sites/default/files/canbriefing\_petersbergdialog\_2020.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)