Policy Recommendations for the
Just Transition Work Programme at COP30:

Overcoming Fragmentation in the UNFCCC to Deliver Just Transitions

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Colophon

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Executive Summary

Context and Challenge: Multilateral cooperation on Just Transitions has evolved from trade union advocacy to formal UNFCCC institutionalisation through the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP). Yet the JTWP risks becoming a dialogue platform without operational power. This brief shows how the JTWP can achieve transformative impact by overcoming the UNFCCC's fragmented approach to Just Transitions.

Our Contribution

- We use an integrated justice framework to analyse gaps in the UNFCCC's current approach to delivering Just Transitions, assessing existing mechanisms against five interdependent forms of justice. This methodology is detailed in the Annex.
- We reveal that current UNFCCC mechanisms fail to deliver Just Transitions because they address interconnected justice needs in isolation.
- We find that the UNFCCC will only be able to deliver Just Transitions if its efforts to address different types of justice are systematically integrated.
- The JTWP could play a critical role in supporting this integration. We provide evidence-based recommendations outlining how the UNFCCC can deliver comprehensive Just Transitions, without duplicating existing work.

Key Findings

- **Multilateral cooperation on Just Transitions is essential.** Uncoordinated transitions create economic spillovers, deepen financial inequality, and undermine political credibility.
- **The JTWP is uniquely positioned to support multilateral action on Just Transitions.** The UNFCCC architecture provides the JTWP with unique legitimacy to take a systematic approach to delivering Just Transitions, but it lacks binding commitments and adequate finance.
- **Efforts to deliver justice are currently fragmented across the UNFCCC.** The UNFCCC currently takes a fragmented approach to delivering Just Transitions, spread across mechanisms that address different justice forms without integration.
- **This fragmentation is not accidental—it serves existing power structures because it allows symbolic justice without redistributing power.** Integration threatens this arrangement, explaining resistance to binding commitments and coordinated implementation. Addressing fragmentation therefore requires systemic solutions, not incremental fixes.
- **These structural tensions create a credibility crisis in the UNFCCC.** Multilateral frameworks recognise justice matters, but a fragmented approach cannot deliver Just Transitions.
- **The JTWP could target eight gaps to address fragmentation:**
  - Insufficient finance for Just Transitions
  - No permanent mechanism, unit or body with the mandate to overcome fragmented approaches to justice in the UNFCCC.
  - Lack of integration of Just Transitions into NDCs and NAPs, with only 23% of Parties mentioning Just Transitions.
  - No binding operationalisation for the JTWP, which risks becoming a 'talking shop.'
  - Unmonitored national and subnational Just Transition action; there are no agreed upon indicators for justice, and acute data gaps remain in the Global South.
  - Poor integration between Just Transitions and human rights.
  - Limited translation of high-level Just Transition commitments into sectoral goals and actionable pathways outside the energy sector.
  - No internationally agreed upon principles for Just Transitions.

- **The JTWP could enact five evidence-based recommendations to deliver Just Transitions**:
  - **Create a permanent Just Transition Unit, Mechanism or Body** to address fragmentation, provide coordination, and support the delivery of key recommendations.
  - **Adopt ILO Guidelines as shared Just Transition principles** with climate-specific extensions.
  - **Incorporate integrated justice assessments** in NDCs, NAPs and the Global Stocktake.
  - **Enhance Just Transition finance** by clarifying eligibility and simplifying access for Just Transition activities.
  - **Develop sector-specific implementation pathways** that deliver Just Transitions beyond the energy sector, and translate high-level commitments into actionable policies.

COP30 in Brazil (November 2025) is the critical moment. Either the JTWP achieves operationalisation through binding commitments and coordinated implementation, or it becomes another dialogue that recognises justice is important in theory, but does not deliver real-world Just Transitions.

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1. Why is multilateral cooperation on Just Transitions essential?

The shift to a sustainable, low-carbon economy demands multilateral cooperation, as national policies ripple globally through trade, finance, and supply chains. Isolated actions risk chaotic, inequitable outcomes, concentrating costs and deepening resentment. This undermines collective climate ambition. Climate action, therefore, requires overcoming not only technical challenges, but fundamental injustices—rooted in uneven development and a history of colonialism.

Three Climate Transition Challenges Requiring Coordinated Global Action

- **Economic interdependence:** Climate policies like carbon pricing or coal phaseouts create economic impacts across borders. Without coordination, countries face competitive distortions (e.g., 'carbon leakage' where production shifts to areas with weaker regulations) and trade conflicts (e.g., the EU's CBAM predicting a 1.12% reduction in African exports) (Adow et al. 2024). The required speed of technological change requires international R&D and technology deployment instead of competitive dynamics.
- **Financial inequality:** Developing nations, often most reliant on fossil fuels, lack an estimated $5.0–6.9 trillion by 2030 to deliver their climate commitments (Standing Committee on Finance 2024). International public finance mechanisms (concessional, dedicated multilateral funding) are essential to prevent impossible choices between development and decarbonisation. Just Transitions require collective resource mobilisation, recognising CBDR-RC and not creating debt-deepening conditional loans (Stanley Center 2025).
- **Political credibility:** Excluding affected groups—such as workers, Indigenous peoples and frontline communities—generates predictable and legitimate resistance and violates collective rights. By integrating these groups into all governance structures, multilateral frameworks could leverage critical knowledge systems essential for climate resilience (Carmona et al. 2023; ITUC 2022).

The Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP)

The Value: Initiatives like the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) are crucial for tackling these deep, interconnected global challenges. Established at COP27 and operationalised at COP28, it offers institutional legitimacy within the Paris Agreement's binding architecture, moving beyond voluntary pacts. Its strength lies in its potential to facilitate international structured knowledge exchange, finance coordination, and support stakeholder participation (Coleman 2025; UNFCCC 2023).

The Gap: Without operational commitments, the JTWP risks becoming a talking shop. Specifically, the JTWP needs dedicated financing streams and operational power. Without this, the JTWP can only recognise that Just Transitions matter, without the capacity for implementation. With the JTWP set to expire in 2026, and Brazil positioning Just Transitions as central to COP30, the coming year is critical. Either the JTWP delivers binding outcomes, or it becomes another failed mechanism undermining multilateral credibility (APMDD 2025; Stanley Center 2025).

2. Why does fragmentation undermine Just Transitions?

Fragmentation Creates New Injustices

Current climate policy often treats various forms and dimensions of justice as a fragmented checklist: how benefits and burdens are shared (distributive), who decides (procedural), whose knowledge and rights are recognised (recognition), and how historical harms are addressed (restorative).

This approach fails because these **different types of justice are fundamentally interdependent**—progress in one can inadvertently create new injustices in others. Justice must therefore be pursued as an integrated system (Abram et al. 2022; McCauley et al. 2019; Newell et al. 2021; Schlosberg & Collins 2014).

A Framework to Identify Gaps in the UNFCCC's Approach to Just Transitions

Treating justice as a checklist creates new injustices. An integrated approach is needed to deliver Just Transitions. This brief provides evidence-based recommendations to achieve this by:

1. **Defining justice forms and dimensions clearly**—establishing what is required to deliver comprehensive Just Transitions.
2. **Diagnosing current gaps**—assessing where UNFCCC mechanisms address justice incompletely or in isolation.
3. **Demonstrating integration**—showing how justice forms and dimensions can work together rather than in conflict.
4. **Recommending solutions**—proposing how to build integrated approaches into UNFCCC architecture.

This systematic method reveals that fragmentation is not accidental but structural, and therefore requires systemic solutions, not incremental fixes.[1]

Five Core Justice Forms

To assess UNFCCC mechanisms,[2] we analyse five interdependent forms of justice (Fraser 2009; Heffron 2021; McCauley & Heffron 2018; Ohlsson & Przybylinski 2023; Schlosberg 2007). Each addresses a distinct question, but all must work together to deliver Just Transitions.

The Five Interdependent Forms of Climate Justice

Justice Form	Core Question	What it Addresses
Distributive	Who pays, who benefits?	Fair allocation of costs, benefits and risks across populations, regions and generations (Galanis et al. 2025; Kopainsky et al. 2024)

1 See the Annex for detailed methodological application and diagnostic analysis.
2 Throughout this brief, we use 'mechanisms' as shorthand for the diverse institutional arrangements within UNFCCC architecture, including funds, platforms, committees, programmes and technical mechanisms.

Justice Form	Core Question	What it Addresses
Procedural	Who decides?	Inclusive, transparent decision-making with meaningful participation (Prifti et al. 2024; Shejale et al. 2025)
Recognitional	Whose rights and knowledge are centred?	Diverse identities, vulnerabilities and knowledge systems (Ciplet & Harrison 2020; Lennon 2020)
Restorative	How are historical responsibilities addressed?	Repairing past harms, environmental damage and historical injustices creating current vulnerabilities (Fitz-Henry & Klein 2024; Heffron & Hazrati 2024)
Transformative	Does policy restructure exploitative systems?	Systemic change addressing root causes of inequality rather than treating symptoms (Bennett et al. 2019; Newell et al. 2021)

Cross-Cutting Dimensions: Scale and Scope

These five interdependent justice forms operate across three dimensions that define where and when justice obligations apply. This analytical approach reveals how justice forms must be assessed not only in relation to each other but at multiple scales simultaneously:

Spatial Justice: Geographic fairness from local to global scales (Banerjee & Schuitema 2023; Przybylinski 2023)

- **What it means**: Transitions must be fair across geographical scales—from neighbourhoods, to nations, to global supply chains.
- **Why it matters for Just Transitions**: Policies that achieve distributive fairness nationally may relocate harm internationally (e.g., outsourcing pollution). Procedural inclusion at national level means little if affected communities in mining regions lack voice. Recognitional justice requires understanding how place-based identities shape vulnerability.
- **Key principle**: Harm cannot simply be displaced geographically. Justice at one scale requires justice at all scales.

Intergenerational Justice: Fairness across generations (Caney 2022; Gasparri et al. 2021)

- **What it means**: Present generations inherit climate damages and bear responsibility to future generations.
- **Why it matters for Just Transitions**: Distributive fairness today may burden future generations with stranded assets or ecological debt. Excluding youth from decisions affecting their futures violates democratic principles. Restorative justice requires acknowledging that current vulnerabilities stem from historical extraction.
- **Key principle**: Each generation must pass on a liveable planet: today's decisions cannot limit the choices available to future generations.

Cosmopolitan Justice: Structural Obligations Transcending Borders (Sculos 2022; Stevis & Felli 2020)

- **What it means**: Climate responsibility cannot be contained by national boundaries. Those who own and benefit from the global system of production that created the crisis are responsible for its impacts on others.
- **Why it matters for Just Transitions**: This underpins the CBDR-RC principle, highlighting uneven historical development as the basis for justice. Distributive fairness requires transfers of wealth and technology from the Global North to the Global South. Procedural justice requires the participation of affected groups in global dialogues. Recognitional justice demands respecting diverse social and development pathways.
- **Key principle**: Obligations are rooted in historical emissions and legacies of extraction and exploitation; wealthy nations cannot claim equal treatment when the global system is structurally biased in their favour.

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3. Can existing UNFCCC mechanisms deliver integrated Just Transitions?

How did we assess justice across existing UNFCCC mechanisms?

Integrated Just Transition activities are key to ensuring that mechanisms do not support one type of justice while undermining another. The current UNFCCC architecture tends to do the opposite, as isolated interventions can worsen the very injustices they claim to address. The JTWP's trajectory from advocacy to stagnation reflects a deeper structural problem. To diagnose gaps in current approaches, we analyse existing arrangements against an integrated justice framework and apply a four part test. This methodology is detailed in the Annex.

The table below summarises the institutional strengths established within the UNFCCC, and the critical points where fragmentation leads to systemic failure.

Institutional Fragmentation Across Justice Forms

Justice Form	Key Mechanisms	Main Strength	Integration Failure
Distributive	GCF, Loss & Damage Fund, NCQG ($300B/yr by 2030 vs. $5.0-6.9T needed), Katowice Committee of Experts (KCI) on economic diversification	Formal structure, vulnerability targeting (50%+ GCF for LDCs/SIDS/Africa)	Complex access procedures favour high-capacity countries, undermining distributive justice; current mechanisms don't account for intersecting vulnerabilities (recognitional gap); KCI addresses fossil-dependent regions but operates largely independently from the JTWP, hindering systematic coherence (Green Climate Fund 2022; Huang 2023; Standing Committee on Finance 2024)
Procedural	LCIPP (50% Indigenous in FWG), Constituency System (9 groups)	Formal participation rights, structured input opportunities	Unpaid participation among observers creates a class barrier (distributive injustice); those with observer status have no decision authority; most consultation is tokenistic and used to legitimise predetermined decisions (limiting transformation) (Carmona et al. 2023; Legal Response International 2019)

Justice Form	Key Mechanisms	Main Strength	Integration Failure
Recognitional	LCIPP, Gender Action Plan, Youth constituency	Formal acknowledgement of diverse identities and knowledge systems	Diverse identities and knowledge types are recognised, but there is limited avenue for groups with these identities and knowledge types to participate (procedural injustice); Recognition of diverse needs and knowledge types is rarely used to inform how resources are allocated or influence final decisions, hindering distributive justice(Shawoo & Thornton 2019; UN Women 2024)
Restorative	Loss & Damage Fund (COP27 breakthrough), Technology Mechanism (CTCN: 85+ countries)	Historic compensation acknowledged; free technical assistance	Voluntary contributions create uncertainty in climate finance (resulting in distributive injustices); affected communities don't govern finances (creating procedural barriers); compensation doesn't challenge ongoing systems of harm (limiting transformation) (Climate Technology Centre & Network n.d.; UNFCCC 2022)
Transformative	JTWP dialogues	Institutional space for dialogue	No finance for systemic transformation; dialogues without authority can't drive change; no mechanisms to centre alternative economic models (Böhm et al. 2012; Climate Justice Alliance 2018; Viveros Uehara & Ely Yamin 2024; Vogel & Hickel 2023)

The UNFCCC's architecture has created systemic trade-offs that degrade justice efforts. This structural fragmentation reflects a deeper institutional failure. **Fairness and equity remain "the most underdeveloped" of the Paris Agreement's foundational pillars**, with current JTWP modalities proving insufficient to drive the systematic integration required (Dane et al. 2025).

Efforts to establish progress in one justice form are routinely rendered ineffective or 'nullified' by another. **This persistent lack of synergy means that every existing mechanism addresses the symptoms of injustice, without ever challenging the underlying causes of injustice.**[3]

3 The Annex provides detailed integration analysis of each mechanism, demonstrating how these trade-offs operate across all five justice forms.

How Cross-Cutting Dimensions Amplify Fragmentation

These integration failures operate across multiple scales simultaneously, magnifying their impact:

- **Spatial displacement:** Mechanisms achieve national-level fairness while displacing costs internationally. For example, the GCF's complex access procedures favour countries with institutional capacity, meaning vulnerable countries with limited state capacity struggle to access funds meant for them. This creates geographic inequities where Sub-Saharan Africa remains underrepresented despite highest vulnerability, and urban-rural disparities within countries go unaddressed (Gabbatiss 2022; Vaidyanathan 2022; Venner et al. 2024).
- **Intergenerational exclusion:** Current procedural mechanisms provide voice to present stakeholders while excluding future generations from decisions affecting their futures. Youth participation remains advisory rather than decision-making (Ingaruca 2022; Lundy 2018). Restorative mechanisms compensate for present-day damages while failing to prevent future harms, addressing symptoms rather than causes (Scobie et al. 2024).
- **Cosmopolitan violations:** Recognitional platforms acknowledge diverse identities, but don't translate to local implementation power. Technology transfer maintains North-South dependency relationships rather than building autonomous Global South capacity. Observer status for affected communities coexists with decision-making power for those historically responsible for the crisis, violating CBDR-RC principles structurally rather than merely rhetorically (CIEL 2023; Haverkamp 2022; Lefstad & Paavola 2023; Okereke et al. 2025).

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4. What critical gaps could the JTWP address to overcome fragmentation?

This fragmentation manifests in eight critical gaps. **These aren't separate problems; they are symptoms of the same structural failure.**

1. There is insufficient finance for Just Transitions (Ayas & Dolan 2023).
2. There is no mechanism with the mandate to overcome fragmented approaches to justice in the UNFCCC, and the JTWP itself is impermanent (Kuehl 2024).
3. Just Transitions are not integrated into NDCs and NAPs, and only 23% of Parties mention Just Transitions (NDC Partnership 2023).
4. There is no binding operationalisation for the JTWP, and it risks becoming a talking shop (Coleman 2025; Dane et al. 2025; Stanley Center 2025).
5. National and subnational Just Transition action is not monitored, there are no agreed upon indicators for justice, and acute data gaps remain in the Global South (Macquarie & Tyson 2025).
6. Just Transitions and human rights are poorly integrated (Adow et al. 2024).
7. High-level Just Transition commitments are not translated into sectoral goals and actionable pathways outside the energy sector (Koren & Rabago 2024; UNFCCC-KCI 2025).
8. There are no internationally agreed upon principles for Just Transitions (Stanley Center 2025).

This reveals why the JTWP, despite its promising focus on justice, hasn't achieved transformative impact. It was established within a fragmented architecture and mandated to support Just Transitions towards the Paris Agreement, but it wasn't given the operational power to achieve this.

This fragmentation isn't accidental: it serves existing power structures. Developed countries can demonstrate climate leadership through finance commitments. But by keeping finance separate from decision-making processes, they retain control over how resources are allocated and which voices shape policy.

Fragmentation allows symbolic justice without redistributing power. Integration threatens this arrangement, explaining resistance to binding commitments and coordinated implementation. This creates a credibility crisis**. Multilateral frameworks recognise that justice matters, but are not designed to deliver Just Transitions.** COP30 presents a critical opportunity for the JTWP to overcome this structural barrier through binding commitments and coordinated implementation—transforming recognition into action.

5. Five Recommendations for Integrated Just Transitions

Introduction: From Fragmentation to Integration

The following five recommendations operationalise integrated Just Transitions by building on existing architecture, creating coordination mechanisms, embedding integration, and establishing accountability. **Each recommendation advances multiple justice forms simultaneously without undermining justice elsewhere in the system**, assessed across spatial (inequalities between and within countries), intergenerational and cosmopolitan (cross-border) dimensions.

Recommendation 1: Establish a Permanent Just Transition Coordination Mechanism, Unit or Body

The Gap: The JTWP's short-term mandate creates uncertainty, preventing long-term partnerships and capacity building (Kuehl 2024). Fragmented initiatives lack coordination, resulting in inefficiencies and hindering real-world impact. Without permanence and coordination, none of the following recommendations (2-5) can be implemented.

The Solution:

A. **Secure Permanence:** Establish the JTWP as a permanent UNFCCC program, with a focus on shifting Just Transitions from dialogue to action. This decision could also formalise stakeholder engagement, ensuring their structured participation in a steering committee (Coleman 2025; Stanley Center 2025).
B. **Create a Just Transition Body, Unit or Mechanism:** A Just Transition Unit, Body or Mechanism could comprise of several permanent full-time staff, performing three functions:
    1. **Mapping & Coordination:** This could include managing a live database of Just Transition initiatives (spanning finance, technical assistance, national action, and research). This would enable the JTWP to identify gaps/overlaps, facilitate partnerships, and prevent duplication by making resources visible.
    2. **Knowledge Management:** This could include creating a repository of national strategies, best practices, and lessons learned—searchable by sector, justice form, income level, and region. The team could prepare an annual synthesis report, and facilitate regional knowledge hubs, South-South cooperation, and horizontal knowledge partnerships (Climate Strategies 2025). This knowledge repository could emphasise practitioner knowledge and affected community expertise, not only technical analysis.
    3. **Integration Monitoring:** This Mechanism, Unit or Body could play a key role in ensuring the integration of Just Transition activities across the UNFCCC. This could include integrating shared Just Transition principles into NDCs, enhancing Just Transition finance coordination, and supporting sector-specific Just Transition implementation (detailed below). This integration could be tracked in an annual Just Transition progress report and linked to Global Stocktake reviews.

Policy Action: At COP30, the decision could establish a permanent coordination Unit, Mechanism or Body. Between COP30-COP31, consultations could be used to finalise the design, determine the budget, and create relevant partnerships. From 2026 onwards, the

Mechanism, Body or Unit could recruit staff, develop systems and launch programmes. From 2026 onwards, the Body, Unit or Mechanism could publish annual reports on their activities.

Success Metric: Permanent Just Transition Body, Mechanism or Unit established by COP30 and made operational by the end of 2026.

Recommendation 2: Adopt ILO Guidelines as UNFCCC Principles with Climate Extensions

The Gap: The lack of agreed upon Just Transition principles in the UNFCCC enables fragmented approaches where countries selectively adopt convenient justice forms while ignoring others (Stanley Center 2025). Multiple initiatives reference different frameworks (ILO, G20, MDBs), undermining policy coherence.

The Solution: Formally adopt ILO Guidelines for Just Transition (2015) as the foundation for UNFCCC just transitions. These principles could be extended to address climate-specific contexts that ILO doesn't cover, including sectoral breadth beyond labour (energy, agriculture, extractives, transport, critical minerals), climate finance allocation principles, intergenerational equity, ecosystem restoration, critical minerals supply chains, and Loss & Damage integration.

Why This Works: Most Paris parties are ILO members. The ILO's social dialogue mechanisms are already established, and labour rights frameworks are internationally recognised (ILO 2015). ILO Guidelines embed human rights and labour rights protections, providing the rights-based foundation that Paris Agreement preamble language lacks in operative force. Rather than negotiating new principles, which risks delay (Stanley Center 2025), this builds on 80+ years of ILO standards. The UNFCCC focuses on climate-specific gaps, not general labour rights, avoiding duplication.

Policy Action: COP30 decision could establish the ILO Guidelines as foundational UNFCCC Just Transition principles, with a mandate for climate-specific extensions. The design of these extended principles could be supported by a permanent Just Transition Unit, Body or Mechanism, which could also provide guidance on integrating principles into NDC 4.0 materials (2030 cycle).

Success Metric: The COP30 decision agrees on Just Transition principles, climate extension principles are agreed by COP32 (2027), 100% of parties reference principles in NDC 4.0 (2030).

Recommendation 3: Incorporate Integrated Justice Assessment in NDCs, NAPs and Global Stocktake

The Gap: Voluntary Just Transition inclusion in NDCs results in the limited integration of Just Transitions into existing climate commitments (only 23% of parties mention it explicitly). Among Parties that include it, coverage varies dramatically: some address only the workforce, others only finance, but only a few address the systemic integration required.

The Solution: Parties could take an integrated approach to incorporating Just Transitions into their NDCs to reduce fragmentation. This could include requiring countries to conduct an integrated justice assessment for major commitments. A tiered approach could be used to limit bureaucratic burdens, with integrated justice assessments only required for policies

to limit bureaucratic burdens, with integrated justice assessments only required for policies that will create wide-scale societal shifts or sectoral transformations. Support could be provided to LDCs/SIDs, with the support of a Just Transition Mechanism, Body or Unit.

Policy Action: The COP30 decision could establish mandatory assessment for NDC 4.0 (2030 cycle) with flexibility provisions and implementation support for Global South countries. A Just Transition Mechanism, Unit or Body could pilot integrated assessment templates with 5-10 countries (2026). The GST2 technical assessment (2026-2027) could include a Just Transition analysis, and the final GST2 outputs at COP33 (2028) could use Just Transition recommendations to inform NDC 4.0 preparation.

Success Metric: 100% of NDC 4.0 submissions (2030) include integrated justice assessment for major commitments, GST2 identifies progress against different types of justice, and at least 50% of developing countries receive implementation support.

Recommendation 4: Establish Coordinated Just Transition Finance Through Existing Instruments with Integration Requirements

The Gap: Creating a new UNFCCC Just Transition Fund risks duplication, delays and coordination challenges. However, current finance architecture (GCF, GEF, Adaptation Fund, bilateral JETPs) operates with inconsistent standards and no common metrics assess if transitions are 'just' (Ayas & Dolan 2023; Stanley Center 2025).

The Solution:

A. **Standardise Eligibility**: Define what activities qualify for Just Transition finance across all instruments, ensuring broader Just Transition approaches (e.g., stakeholder engagement, diversification) are supported.
B. **Restructure Access for Justice:** Current barriers (complex bureaucracy, co-financing requirements) create procedural injustice, undermining distributive goals. Funding actors could simplify procedures to streamline access for LDCs/SIDS, create dedicated Just Transition funding windows, enhance direct access, and remove co-financing requirements.
C. **Align JETPs with UNFCCC:** Once the UNFCCC has developed clear principles for Just Transitions, current and future JETP arrangements could be assessed against these principles. This ensures JETP funding supports integrated justice, and limits gaps between rhetoric and real-world commitments. This alignment doesn't prevent countries from developing bilateral, context-specific JETPs, which would remain country-driven partnerships. However, common standards (e.g., grant targets, funding for stakeholder engagement) balance bilateral efficiency with multilateral accountability.

Policy Action: At COP30, the decision text could include a reference to clarifying activities that are eligible for Just Transition finance. Between COP30 and COP31, funders could adopt criteria and pilot new access systems, and the NCQG could work with a Just Transition Unit, Mechanism or Body to track Just Transition finance and target the Just Transition needs identified in NDCs. The GST2 could assess Just Transition finance and JETP progress.

Success Metric: All major climate funds have explicit Just Transition eligibility criteria by 2026, most Just Transition finance is provided in the form of grants for LDCs/SIDs by 2027,

Sub-Saharan Africa reaches proportional share of Just Transition finance by 2028, the JETP alignment process is initiated by 2026.

Recommendation 5: Develop Integrated Sectoral Just Transition Pathways Through Coordinated Mechanisms

The Gap: Energy dominates Just Transition dialogues, leaving other key sectors (agriculture, extractive industries, transport, and critical minerals) with inadequate attention, despite representing billions of livelihoods (Koren & Rabago 2024).

The Solution: The Just Transition Unit, Body or Mechanism supports the development of integrated and sector-specific Just Transition pathways— focused on energy, agriculture, extractives, transport, and critical minerals. For each priority sector, the JTWP convenes an annual, three-day technical dialogue to develop sector-specific pathways for Just Transitions. The dialogues could bring together sectoral experts, national practitioners, affected workers and communities to develop sector-specific plans for Just Transition implementation. These dialogues could synergise with other UN agencies to secure sectoral data, and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues through regional engagements and virtual townhalls. Smaller technical working groups could synthesize the guidance and develop practical toolkits. The Just Transition Body, Unit or Mechanism could provide technical guidance, and identify opportunities for cross-sectoral coordination (e.g., Just Transitions in the energy sector will impact Just Transitions for critical minerals).

Policy Action: COP30 could set out a five-year plan (one sector annually) to develop sector-specific plans for Just Transition implementation. By 2030, Parties could reference the pathways in their NDCs, adapted to national contexts.

Success Metric: Five pathway guidance documents by COP35 (2030), at least 50% of Parties reference sectoral pathways in NDC 4.0 (2030), 20 parties pilot implementation by 2027, and sectoral finance is operational by 2028.

Synthesis: Five Recommendations as an Integrated System

The five recommendations function as mutually reinforcing interventions rather than standalone fixes. **The absence of any single recommendation would undermine the others.**

For example:

- Creating Just Transition principles without integrating them into NDCs and other commitments enables selective adoption. Countries commit to Just Transitions in high-level statements, but their actual NDC targets may exclude workers, bypass affected communities and shift costs to vulnerable populations—undermining political trust.
- Just Transition finance without coordination perpetuates fragmentation. Different funds impose contradictory requirements and countries exhaust capacity navigating multiple access procedures. Finance reaches the same well-connected actors repeatedly, while the most vulnerable remain unfunded.
- Supporting sector-specific Just Transition pathways without monitoring or knowledge sharing hides failures until crises emerge. This also prevents cross-sectoral learning, as countries repeat mistakes from coal transitions in agriculture, transport and minerals, while the UNFCCC lacks data to identify what works or adjust course.

Taken together, these recommendations make fragmented justice structurally visible and politically untenable. By making contradictions explicit—between rhetoric and practice, between principles and finance, between participation and power—the recommendations create pressure for systemic change that takes an integrated approach to delivering Just Transitions.

Ensuring the Recommendations Do Not Create Unintended Consequences

The above recommendations are intended to enhance the UNFCCC's approach to delivering Just Transitions. To ensure that these recommendations do not create new injustices, the table below considers the potential negative impacts of these policies, and recommends strategies to mitigate these impacts.

Addressing Potential Harms

Potential Harm	**Mitigation Built into Design**
New requirements for integrating Just Transitions into NDCs and other commitments could create a burden on low-income countries (e.g., conducting assessments, hosting consultations, implementing findings)	A Just Transition Unit, Body or Mechanism could provide support with institutional capacity strengthening. Requirements for justice assessments could also be tiered, and additional financial support could be provided for LDCs and SIDs.

Potential Harm	Mitigation Built into Design
The Global North dominates the creation of principles, despite the fact that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to Just Transitions.	Building on existing, widely established and high-level principles (e.g., ILO principles) creates a foundation for mutual understanding, while maintaining flexibility. Integrating stakeholder engagement into principle design, as well as creating space for south-to-south dialogue on principles, could also mitigate this risk.
Limited finance for Just Transitions, and challenges accessing finance.	A streamlined approach to accessing finance is key, as is the creation of dedicated windows for Just Transition financing and improved direct access for a wide variety of stakeholders.
Sectoral pathways are perceived as top-down approaches to Just Transitions.	Social dialogues are central to developing sector-specific implementation pathways, which would act as recommendations and take a flexible approach to implementation.
Monitoring the outcomes of Just Transition policies could create a bureaucratic burden	A Just Transition Body, Mechanism or Unit could provide support, as could existing capacity strengthening mechanisms in the UNFCCC. Other UN agencies could collaborate to support data collection, which would also serve broader national planning.

The above recommendations embed the integration principle by recognising interdependencies across different justice types, and including actions to mitigate potential harm. This design reflects the reality that **achieving integrated justice requires not only diagnosing fragmentation in existing mechanisms, but also ensuring new interventions don't reproduce the same failures**.

6. Conclusion: From Fragmentation to Integration at COP30

COP30 in Brazil (November 2025) is a critical moment to either operationalise or stall the JTWP. The JTWP will be reviewed at COP31, which means the programme has only one year left to demonstrate its value. Moreover, countries are now preparing their fourth NDC cycle, with the next GST taking place by 2028—a key window to assess progress on justice.

In the interim, **the gap between real-world transitions and institutional frameworks is widening**. Nations and communities will pursue Just Transitions outside multilateral frameworks if the UNFCCC cannot deliver. A multilateral approach to Just Transitions is essential because it limits the unintended impacts of uncoordinated transitions.

The **JTWP is well positioned to support multilateral Just Transition action** because of its institutional legitimacy, and its potential to facilitate international coordination on finance, knowledge sharing, and stakeholder participation. However, if the JTWP doesn't take an active role in addressing fragmentation and delivering Just Transitions, the UNFCCC will lose relevance.

There are two potential pathways forward:

> **Pathway 1—Continued Fragmentation**: The JTWP remains dialogue-focused without binding commitments. Finance for Just Transitions continues to be bilateral, loan-heavy, and inadequate. The majority of support goes to the energy sector, and there is limited clarity on how to implement Just Transitions in other sectors. Fragmented arrangements persist, undermining Just Transitions across the UNFCCC, and resulting in inefficiencies and duplication both within and outside the UNFCCC.
>
> **Pathway 2—Operationalised Integration:** The JTWP adopts Just Transition principles, creating a shared foundation for collective action, including the integration of Just Transitions into NDCs. The JTWP establishes a permanent Just Transition Body, Mechanism or Unit to address fragmentation and support key activities, such as knowledge-sharing, stakeholder engagement and coordination. Finance for Just Transition is coordinated to reduce inefficiencies and made more accessible, accelerating Just Transition implementation. Stakeholders work together to translate high-level Just Transition commitments into sector-specific strategies for implementation, driving Just Transitions beyond the energy sector.

These activities address a currently fragmented system. They have the potential to both overcome gaps (e.g., in knowledge sharing and coordination) and integrate the UNFCCC's approach to justice to ensure that other arrangements (e.g., L&D) are not being undermined.

Overcoming fragmentation in the UNFCCC is critical not only to Just Transitions, but to delivering multilateral climate action more broadly. Fragmentation supports the status quo and limits the potential for genuine justice. Without meaningful action on justice, the UNFCCC faces a credibility crisis.

The system recognises justice matters, but its structural limitations mean it cannot deliver fair, collective climate action. This creates understandable resistance to ambitious climate policies. **It is unlikely that these tensions will be resolved until decisionmakers take an integrated approach to justice that facilitates genuine action on Just Transitions.**

ANNEX: APPLYING THE INTEGRATION TEST TO UNFCCC MECHANISMS

This annex provides detailed analysis of how UNFCCC mechanisms fail to deliver integrated Just Transitions. While the main brief identifies fragmentation patterns across the UNFCCC architecture, this annex demonstrates the diagnostic methodology used to uncover those patterns.

We apply a four-part integration test to assess whether mechanisms genuinely support Just Transitions. The test reveals not just what fails, but how and why isolated interventions create new injustices.

The necessary methodological balance for integrated analysis is achieved through:

1. **Analytical Separation for Diagnosis**: Justice forms must be conceptually separated to enable precise identification of gaps. Without analytical separation, we cannot diagnose where and how fragmentation occurs.
2. **Systemic Integration for Policy Design**: However, analytical separation is not sufficient for policy-making. Justice forms are fundamentally interdependent in practice; they must be systemically integrated in policy design and assessment.

The Integration Test Methodology

A policy or mechanism qualifies as supporting Just Transition only if it:

1. Advances at least one justice form explicitly—demonstrates clear positive impact on distributive, procedural, recognitional, restorative or transformative justice
2. Does not undermine justice in other forms—avoids creating new injustices while addressing one concern
3. Accounts for spatial and temporal relations—considers how interventions operate across geographic scales (local to global) and time horizons (present to future generations), and addresses structural obligations that transcend national boundaries
4. Integrates affected community participation in design—ensures affected communities shape transition pathways with decision-making authority, not through consultation alone

The **five justice forms** assess distinct but interdependent aspects of Just Transitions: **distributive** (fair allocation of costs and benefits), **procedural** (inclusive decision-making and participation), **recognitional** (acknowledging diverse identities, rights and knowledge systems), **restorative** (repairing historical harms and environmental damage), and **transformative** (systemic change addressing root causes of inequality).

Point 3 assesses how mechanisms address three cross-cutting dimensions: spatial justice (fairness across geographic scales, from neighbourhoods to global supply chains), intergenerational justice (obligations to future generations and accountability for historical harms), and cosmopolitan justice (structural responsibilities transcending borders, rooted in historical emissions and uneven development). These dimensions reveal how fragmentation operates across multiple scales simultaneously.

This test enables systematic diagnosis of how mechanisms address justice forms in isolation, creating the fragmentation documented in the main brief.

1. Distributive Justice Mechanisms

Primary Instruments: Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund, LDCF, SCCF, Loss & Damage Fund, NCQG

Advances distributive justice? Yes. Formal institutional structures with dedicated funding streams target vulnerable countries. The GCF mandates a 50:50 mitigation/adaptation split with at least 50% of adaptation funding for LDCs, SIDS and African states (Green Climate Fund 2022). The NCQG establishes $300 billion annually by 2035, scaling to $1.3 trillion by 2035 (World Meteorological Organisation 2024; UN News 2024).

Undermines other forms? Yes, significantly:

- Procedural undermining: Complex access procedures create barriers favouring countries with institutional capacity – the very capacity distributive justice aims to address. Co-financing requirements burden the poorest countries, creating a 'low funding trap'; those needing most support face highest access barriers.
- Recognitional undermining: Fund allocation treats 'vulnerable countries' as monolithic without accounting for intersecting vulnerabilities (gender, Indigenous status, disability). Distributive allocations may reach countries while bypassing the most marginalised communities within them.
- Transformative undermining: Finance flows maintain existing economic structures. JETP loan dominance (only 2% grants in Vietnam, 7% in Indonesia) creates debt burdens rather than enabling transformation (Ayas & Dolan 2023), perpetuating dependency rather than building autonomous capacity.

Accounts for spatial/temporal relations? Partially. National-level mechanisms don't ensure subnational equity, for example, finance reaching capitals may not reach affected regions. Short-term funding cycles (3-5 year project timelines) don't align with long-term transition needs (20-30 year timeframes), creating implementation gaps.

Integrates affected communities? No. Fund governance remains donor-dominated. Affected communities have observer status but no decision-making power over resource allocation.

Integration Assessment: Strong distributive architecture fundamentally weakened by procedural barriers and recognitional gaps. Attempts to distribute resources fairly fail because they don't account for differentiated access capacity or challenge power structures determining allocation.

2. Procedural Justice Mechanisms

Primary Instruments: LCIPP, Constituency System (9 groups), JTWP dialogues

Advances procedural justice? Yes. Formal recognition of stakeholder participation rights through biannual dialogues, submissions and constituency interventions. LCIPP ensures 50% Indigenous representation in its Facilitative Working Group (Legal Response International 2019).

Undermines other forms? Yes:

- **Distributional undermining**: Unpaid participation is the only option for some stakeholders, creating class barriers. Only those who can afford time away from livelihoods and international travel costs can engage, reproducing the very inequalities procedural justice aims to address (Carmona et al. 2023).

- **Recognitional undermining**: 'Local communities' conflated with Indigenous Peoples threatens distinct Indigenous rights (Shea & Thornton 2020). No systematic inclusion of other marginalised groups (persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities).
- **Transformative undermining:** Observer status preserves existing power structures. Consultation without decision-making power means stakeholder input may legitimate predetermined decisions rather than shape outcomes.

Accounts for spatial/temporal relations? Partially. Global platforms don't ensure local implementation; national governments may engage at UNFCCC level while excluding affected communities domestically, creating ‘participation gaps’ across governance scales. Youth participation remains advisory, constituting structural intergenerational inequity. Moreover, observer status for Global South civil society coexists with decision power for Global North governments, violating CBDR-RC principles structurally.

Integrates affected communities? Symbolically yes, substantively no. Communities can observe and advise but cannot vote or make binding decisions. There is consultation, not co-decision.

Integration Assessment: Procedural mechanisms provide voice without power. Without addressing distributional barriers to access and recognitional hierarchies determining whose voice matters, procedural justice becomes performative.

3. Recognitional Justice Mechanisms

Primary Instruments: LCIPP, Gender Action Plan/Lima Work Programme, Youth constituency

Advances recognitional justice? Yes. Formal acknowledgment of diverse identities, knowledge systems and rights. Indigenous knowledge is explicitly valued alongside Western science (UNESCO 2025). Dedicated platforms for historically marginalised groups.

Undermines other forms? Yes:
- **Procedural undermining**: Recognition without participation mechanisms. Women comprise 35% of COP29 delegates, this represented minimal progress from 34% at COP28 (UN Women 2024). Being 'seen' doesn't translate to decision-making authority.
- **Distributional undermining**: No systematic tracking of whether recognition translates to resource allocation. Gender-responsive climate finance remains rhetorical; recognition platforms are symbolic without corresponding operational changes directing finance to recognised groups.
- **Restorative undermining**: There is acknowledgment of historical harms (e.g., stolen land) without operationalised UNFCCC mechanisms for material redress, which renders recognition cosmetic.
- **Transformative undermining:** There is a risk of knowledge extraction, as Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge is valued only within Western frameworks rather than centring Indigenous intellectual authority (Shawoo & Thornton 2019). Representation doesn't challenge underlying power structures.

Accounts for spatial/temporal relations? No. Recognition at global UNFCCC level doesn't ensure implementation in national contexts or local projects. There is a disconnect between high-level acknowledgment and ground-level practice. Youth representatives are recognised symbolically but excluded from substantive present decision-making.

Integrates affected communities? Partially in design platforms, but not in outcomes. Communities help shape recognitional mechanisms, but these mechanisms don't grant power over resource allocation or policy decisions.

Integration Assessment: Recognition mechanisms achieve symbolic justice without substantive justice. Fraser's (2009) classic critique applies: recognition without redistribution leaves structural inequalities intact. Being acknowledged doesn't translate to material improvement or decision-making power.

4. Restorative Justice Mechanisms

Primary Instruments: Loss & Damage architecture (Warsaw International Mechanism, Santiago Network, L&D Fund), Technology Mechanism (TEC, CTCN), CBDR-RC principle

Advances restorative justice? Yes. There was a historic breakthrough in climate compensation through Loss & Damage Fund (UNFCCC 2022; Wyns 2023). This provided recognition of historical emissions responsibility. Free technical assistance to developing countries is available, for example, the CTCN serves 85+ countries through 760+ institutions (Climate Technology Centre & Network n.d.).

Undermines other forms? Yes.

- **Distributional undermining**: Voluntary contributions to L&D Fund create funding uncertainty. The scale remains inadequate, as commitments fall far short of estimated needs.
- **Procedural undermining**: Affected communities don't control how funds are governed or allocation priorities. The Santiago Network was recently operationalised (2023), but affected countries were not substantively involved in designing its governance structure.
- **Recognitional undermining**: The 'Loss and Damage' framing emphasises material/economic costs over cultural and spiritual losses. No systematic inclusion of Indigenous concepts of restoration.
- **Transformative undermining**: This compensation model doesn't challenge systems that create ongoing harm, and therefore risks becoming a 'pay to pollute' mechanism. Technology transfer focuses on access rather than capacity to innovate autonomously, maintaining dependency relationships.

Accounts for spatial/temporal relations? Partially. It compensates present damages while systems creating future damages continue. Without transformation, restorative justice becomes perpetual damage management. Technology transfer maintains North-South hierarchies rather than building Southern autonomous capability.

Integrates affected communities? No. Communities are beneficiaries but not governors of restorative mechanisms.

Integration Assessment: Restorative mechanisms acknowledge historical debt but provide insufficient material redress and lack participatory control by affected populations. Critically, restoration without transformation is merely damage management: addressing past damages while allowing systems to create new damages.

5. Transformative Justice: The Absent Form

Primary Instruments (theoretical): JTWP, NDC processes

Advances transformative justice? Minimally. The JTWP provides institutional space for dialogue. NDC flexibility allows countries to define pathways.

Undermines other forms? Transformative justice is insufficiently present to undermine anything directly. However, its **absence undermines all other forms and dimensions:**

- Distributive justice becomes redistributive—moving resources within existing structures rather than restructuring
- Procedural justice becomes consultative—input without authority to reshape systems
- Recognitional justice becomes tokenistic—acknowledgment without power to centre alternative worldviews structurally
- Restorative justice becomes compensatory—addressing damages while harm-causing systems persist

Accounts for spatial/temporal relations? No. Global frameworks lack local implementation power. No mechanisms ensure transformative dialogue translates to on-the-ground change. Short-term political cycles override long-term transformation timelines; electoral imperatives prevent systemic change requiring decades.

Integrates affected communities? No. Dialogues include stakeholders but lack authority to implement transformation.

Integration Assessment: Transformative justice is nearly absent from UNFCCC architecture. Mechanisms address symptoms (distributing resources, acknowledging groups, compensating harms) without confronting root causes of extractive economies, colonial relations and capitalist growth imperatives. Without the transformative dimension, other justice forms become reformist rather than transformational, making existing systems fairer without changing systems that create unfairness.

6. Synthesis: Why Fragmentation Persists

This analysis reveals three interconnected reasons for persistent fragmentation:

Structural Design: UNFCCC mechanisms are institutionally separate. Finance, participation, recognition, compensation and dialogue operate through different bodies with minimal coordination. This architectural fragmentation produces justice fragmentation.

Political Economy: Fragmentation serves existing power structures. Developed countries can demonstrate leadership through finance while retaining control through procedural exclusion. Symbolic recognition avoids material redistribution. Compensation acknowledges past harms without preventing future ones. This allows 'justice' claims without power redistribution.

Methodological Absence: The lack of a mandatory integration test means Parties can claim commitment to 'just transition' while advancing one form and undermining others. Therefore, **fragmentation is not accidental but structurally induced.**

7. Implications for JTWP Reform

The detailed integration analysis demonstrates that closing critical gaps (Section 4) requires architectural transformation, not technical fixes. The JTWP must:

- Coordinate across mechanisms rather than creating parallel structures
- Integrate forms in design rather than treating them separately
- Empower affected communities in governance, not just consultation
- Enable transformation through finance, principles and accountability mechanisms
- Assess integration through binding requirements, not voluntary commitments

Without these shifts, additional mechanisms simply fragment further. The JTWP's value lies not in creating new institutions but in providing frameworks that enable existing ones to integrate justice systemically rather than address it piecemeal.

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