



**JUST**  
TRANSITION  
ALLIANCE

# Joint Declaration



## Just Transition Alliance

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**We need a Just Transition to protect and create jobs, reduce emissions, enhance living standards and generate new opportunities that will help to build sustainable, resilient communities across the country.**

A Just Transition also provides the most effective means to safeguard and restore biodiversity, at a national and international level.

Just Transition is a concept that originated from within the global trade union movement and provides the most comprehensive framework to deliver the carbon transition, while ensuring that no worker or community is left behind.

The Just Transition Centre of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) defines a Just Transition as one which:

*"...secures the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a zero-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their unions, employers, government and communities. A plan for Just Transition provides and guarantees better and decent jobs, social protection, more training opportunities and greater job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies."*

Job losses and lower living standards are not the automatic outcome of the carbon transition, but result from poor planning and misplaced faith in the efficacy of the free market.

The fastest and fairest transition is one that is inclusive, protects jobs and communities and delivers new opportunities for all.

We believe that the urgent drive towards a zero-carbon economy and the development of a new industrial model based on renewable energy sources and systems must lead to the creation of a fairer economy and more equal societies.

The single most effective means of achieving and delivering this change is by working collaboratively to ensure that all climate policy and action is framed and underpinned by the practice and principles of Just Transition.

This will involve building a broad coalition across the trade union movement, environmental organisations and wider civil society.

We note that the Irish government has committed to the implementation of a Just Transition by signing up to a range of global accords and treaties, most notably the 2015 Paris Agreement and the 2018 Silesia Declaration, both of which contain explicit undertakings on this issue.

The European Union's recovery plan - Next Generation EU - builds on the commitments contained in these accords.

The Irish government also signed up to the Just Transition pledge that emerged from COP 26.

This explicitly commits to supporting and promoting social dialogue and the creation of Decent Work, as part of the transition process.

This accepted and agreed global framework for action on climate change is substantially underpinned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All.

The guidelines clearly set out the key components required for the implementation of a Just Transition at national level: building strong social consensus, the centrality of social dialogue, the creation of Decent Work, social protection and skills development.

The United Nations has called on all countries to embrace the ILO Guidelines “as the minimum standard to ensure progress of decent work for all.”

We note also that the March 2020 report of the National Economic & Social Council (NESC) sets out the essential blueprint for building a Just Transition in Ireland, and that its key recommendations reflect a clear consensus on this issue across our society.

This will require the State to take a leading and decisive role in driving the transition process, acting in conjunction with key state agencies and companies, particularly those in the energy generation and production sector.

In doing so, it is critical that policymakers act in accordance with this agreed global framework and adopt both the language and the substance of Just Transition.

To date, the experience of the low carbon transition process in Ireland has been overwhelming negative.

While extraordinary sacrifices have been demanded of peat workers and the communities of the Midlands, this has not been matched by the required supports from government or state agencies, in a manner consistent with Just Transition.

To date, over 1,000 jobs have been lost in the sector and there has been a signal failure to create new, replacement jobs and quality employment opportunities for the affected workers and communities, in a manner consistent with Just Transition.

This contrasts sharply with far more positive experience of transition for workers and communities in Spain, Germany and Australia, for example.

Until these deficits are addressed the entire transition process in Ireland risks becoming synonymous with job loss and lower living standards, with a resultant erosion of worker confidence and public support.

The shift towards a zero-carbon economy will not stop in the Midlands but will impact and affect all sectors of the economy and society.

Therefore, in accordance with its international treaty obligations and the global framework Ireland must urgently develop an overarching plan and strategy to deliver a genuine Just Transition across our economy and society.

This transformative programme would work to cut emissions, restore biodiversity, create quality replacement jobs for those that may be lost, generate new employment opportunities and help create a more sustainable economy and society for all.

The Just Transition Alliance supports the target of reducing emissions by 51% by 2030 and accepts the national carbon budgets as proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council.

We therefore call on government as a matter of urgency to:

- As a matter of urgency, move immediately to establish a National Just Transition Commission, in advance of formal legislation, based on social dialogue and comprised of representatives of government, trade unions, employers, affected communities and civil society. The Commission would be charged with developing the national framework and blueprint for Just Transition covering the entire economy, in line with the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition.
- The focus of the Commission will be on job retention, protection of living standards, skills development, the creation of Decent Work in respect of new employment opportunities arising from the transition - particularly in the renewable energy sector - and will underpinned by a commitment to genuine community and regional development;
- Act with urgency to ensure that those sectors of the economy and those regions that are most vulnerable to change are prioritised under the Just Transition process;
- Commit to the development of a new overarching policy and strategy for the energy sector that ensures the maximum retention of key energy assets in public ownership and a leading, strategic role for the State in the development of the renewable energy;
- This process must align with commitments entered into under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 7) on ensuring "access to affordable, reliable, sustainable" energy for all. To this end, it is critical that energy is officially designated as an 'essential public good' (like health or education) and that there is a guarantee of access to affordable energy as a core policy priority of government.



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