



**PRESIDENTIAL
CLIMATE COMMISSION**
TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION

Multistakeholder Conference on South Africa's Just Transition Chair's Summary

6 May 2022

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

On 5-6 May 2022, the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) convened a multistakeholder conference on the just transition in South Africa. The conference provided an opportunity for social partners to gather and set out shared priorities for a just transition. Participants underscored the urgency of a just and equitable transition, and many announced their support for the PCC's Just Transition Framework, which will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in mid-2022.

The multistakeholder conference concludes a series of stakeholder engagements and community consultations across the country over the past two months, where the PCC met directly with communities that are being impacted severely by climate change, and those that will face livelihoods risks in the years ahead due to the transition away from fossil fuels. Workshops were held in Lephalale, Emalahleni, Carolina, Secunda, Durban South Basin, Xolobeni, Gqerberha, and Hotazel, and the PCC also consulted with all major stakeholder groups in South Africa—giving life to the principles of procedural justice in the transition.

The PCC was joined in the May multistakeholder conference by more than 300 participants in-person, and hundreds joining live online, representing many major stakeholder groups in South Africa, including government, business, labour, academia, and civil society.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE CONFERENCE

The impacts of climate change are already being felt across South Africa. The recent devastating floods in Kwa-Zulu Natal put these climate impacts in sharp focus, causing catastrophic loss of life and widespread destruction. The conference held a moment of silence for the hundreds of people that lost their lives, and paid tribute to the heroes that have worked tirelessly to rebuild homes and infrastructure.

Climate change exacerbates South Africa's triple challenges: poverty, unemployment, and inequality. A *just transition* is therefore about seizing opportunities and managing risks associated with climate change, with an overarching focus on improving the lives and livelihoods of South Africans, particularly those most impacted. This transition is about putting people first and at the centre of decision-making, as the country transitions towards a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economy and society.

The transition must embody all aspects of justice.

- Workers, communities, and small businesses must be empowered and supported in the transition, with *them* defining *their* own development and livelihoods. “Nothing about us without us!”
- The risks and opportunities resulting from the transition must be distributed fairly, and past harms must be rectified. It is essential that impacted workers and communities do not carry the overall burden of the transition.
- The resilience of people and the environment must be increased, through:
 - affordable, decentralised, diversely owned renewable energy systems
 - the conservation of natural resources
 - equitable access of water resources, and
 - sustainable, equitable, inclusive land-use for all, especially the most vulnerable.

The work on just transitions in South Africa—and the Just Transition Framework—builds on significant learnings, experiences, and consultations. Over several months, affected workers and communities have shared with the PCC their fears and hopes for the transition. They have spoken passionately and articulately about the unfairness of their current situations, and their visions for a more equal and more inclusive society.

Conference participants identified several priority interventions to give effect to a just transition in South Africa:

- 1. We must build community and economic resilience to the physical impacts of climate change.** Participants shared their experiences on how climate change is impacting their daily lives. Participants noted the importance of a range of measures, to be co-created amongst social partners with community ownership, coupled with learnings from past experiences. There is a need for disruptive approaches to deal with the significant climate impacts. For example, in dealing with non-compliance to the payment of municipal rates, municipalities must explore non-punitive measures, including dedicated capacity building for councillors on issues of sustainable development. Participants further called for programmes to generate greater awareness on key issues, such as human settlements, climate change and other sustainable development elements.
- 2. We must ensure an equitable transition that facilitates access to good quality water, nutritious food, and health services.** While the just transition conversation has, thus far, mostly focused on the energy transition, participants stressed the importance of broadening the scope to include food, water, and human health. Achieving a just transition in these other sectors will require a holistic approach, encompassing several policies and actions: innovative governance and financing, effective water allocation mechanisms, leveraging indigenous knowledge, building master skills plans, and applying a gender lens to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women. Sectoral adaptation plans, with community engagement, can also help lay a framework for the transition in these sectors.

3. We must spur development and economic diversification in a low-carbon economy.

Participants noted the importance of building capacity at the provincial and local level to develop plans for the green economy, and to help decision-makers identify viable opportunities that address community priorities—all while tying together climate and development issues. It is essential to support the reskilling, upskilling, and the education of workers, particularly in areas facing jobs losses (e.g., due to plant closures). Opportunities identified for supporting economic diversification include promoting local manufacturing; revitalising key opportunity sectors such as agriculture; supporting green supply chain development and land repurposing; and developing an economically viable waste economy.

4. We must provide social support, skills development, and active labour market measures.

Participants said that it will be essential to improve job and community readiness during the transition. Creating a decent sustainable work framework can help address different issues facing formal, informal and atypical workers. Implementing a Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG) can provide an essential safety net to protect those whose livelihoods are at risk due to the transition. Supporting local champions will also ensure ongoing, inclusive, and meaningful consultations and collaborations with stakeholders to help understand the type of social support that is required.

5. We must have inclusive governance, coupled with regional and local development mechanisms.

Participants emphasised that inclusive governance must put people first and make services accessible to all people, especially those who typically face barriers to access and are less able to participate in the engagement process. Language must be accessible, and we must embrace indigenous knowledge systems. Inclusive governance must activate smaller municipalities, empower women, address environmental racism, and deal with the issue of land (access, rights, and pollution). Monitoring government and business on all levels is crucial, including timeframes on plans, to increase transparency and accountability.

6. We must mobilise and scale up finance for the just transition.

While there has been progress in some key areas for scaling up finance (REIPPP, SMME support, grassroots engagements), several barriers remain, including corruption and governance challenges; risk aversion and fiscal constraints preventing greater investment; lack of transparency in allocations; and misalignment between policy and regulation and across institutions. Participants identified several opportunities to help address these barriers and scale-up financing, including more clearly articulating the costs of the transition, identifying "shovel-ready" projects for the \$8.5 billion financing deal, donor coordinating, focusing on inclusion and demonstration programmes owned by the communities, and strengthening public-private partnerships.

A successful transition requires collective action, pulling toward a shared vision. The transitions that lie ahead will be difficult for some. Government has a crucial role to play in setting the agenda, driving policy through inclusive processes, and mobilising resources. Other social partners will also need to play their part. Finding common ground is possible but will require sincere commitment by all social partners.

The Just Transition Framework provides a template for the transition, and the principles to guide the transition, including from voices not often heard. The Framework identifies the opportunities presented by a low-emissions and climate-resilient economy, where there is an opportunity to grow the economy through new and better jobs. Social partners are clear that the transition should protect constituents, provide a reasonable opportunity to work, and empower those that are most impacted.

LOOKING AHEAD

The current draft Just Transition Framework will be updated based on comments received from all stakeholder groups over the past several months, and at the multistakeholder conference. The Framework will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration in mid-2022. Government has already committed to integrating the just transition into planning and budgeting processes at the highest levels of government.

The Just Transition Framework is not exhaustive, but rather a first organizing frame to spur action. As we move forward, we will continue to update the Framework as new learnings and stakeholder consultations take place. The Presidential Climate Commission will continue to engage with all stakeholders, especially those most impacted, to ensure that their voices and experiences give effect to a just transition in South Africa.