

# **CLIMATE POLICY** FOR A JUST TRANSITION





Adults keep saying: "We owe it to the young people to give them hope." But I don't want your hope, I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis.

Greta Thunberg, speech to the World Economic Forum (WEF), Davos, Switzerland, 22 January 2019



# Together, we shall succeed with the transition

**The ongoing environmental** and climate crisis is a threat to our very existence and all future development. We must all work together to fight it. The global labour movement is powering what is known as a *Just Transition*, where our economic system is undergoing fundamental change and being replaced with a new system that is both fair and sustainable.

Simply put, there can be no social and economic justice if we fail to deal with the threat posed by the climate crisis. There are no jobs and no welfare state on a dead planet. Global heating is already having brutal consequences for hundreds of millions of people all over the world, with fires, floods, storms and droughts becoming increasingly common and severe – not to mention the spread of infectious diseases. All of these disasters amplify inequalities, deepen poverty and exacerbate injustice.

One of the core concepts of justice in The Paris Agreement is that workers who risk losing their jobs when we make the change to a climatefriendly economy must be guaranteed a Just Transition. We must succeed in eliminating carbon emissions while showing consideration to those who are impacted by this shift.

As early as at the first environmental conference held in Stockholm in June 1972, Olof Palme said:

"I am convinced that we can find solutions, but it

is absolutely essential that we work together internationally. Time is very, very short. Solutions will demand far-reaching changes in attitudes and the very organisation of society."

Time is indeed short, but we still have a chance to succeed with the transition. If we have learned anything from the corona pandemic, it is that we can come up with powerful and global political measures when we are facing a serious crisis. We in the labour movement need to mobilise all our power to contribute to the battle against environmental and climate destruction. This constitutes the core of our political project. Our shared future depends on it.

With this brochure, we at the Olof Palme International Center are seeking to spread knowledge about the threat to our climate, to highlight the opportunity that a Just Transition entails for our movement, and to pick up on your



ideas, contacts and opportunities to work together to promote a sustainable world.



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## The situation is acute

**The mean temperature** of the Earth has risen almost 1.2 degrees since 1850. That was when Europe and North America started using coal, oil and natural gas in industries and transports. In fact, the temperature rose by 0.87 degrees between 2006 and 2015 alone. We need to act immediately if we are to slow this development and switch to a safer path.

"The labour movement has a key role to play in reducing opposition to what must be done to save the climate and tackling the concern that people will lose their jobs," explains Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of ITUC, the global trade union organisation.

Researchers on the UN climate panel, IPCC, are preparing future scenarios for global heating, and tracking developments year on year. If we do nothing and continue along the same path, many areas of the world will soon become uninhabitable.

"We must complete the climate transition in partnership with our fellow citizens. Otherwise we risk ignoring the issue and doing nothing," says Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Deputy President of the International Trade Union Confederation.

#### Effects of the climate crisis

Higher temperatures are already the source of severe problems for people living in poverty. Extreme heat waves, drought, storms, flash floods and fires are causing extensive damage. Rising sea levels are forcing people to abandon their homes in the island nations of the Pacific Rim. Water shortages and the spread of infectious diseases such as malaria are on the rise because of the climate crisis.

#### Climate disruption today:

- Swarms of grasshoppers are devastating harvests in east Africa, 2020.
- The highest daytime temperature in Antarctica ever measured was recorded in February

2020. It is estimated that 6.4 trillion tonnes of ice have melted at the poles, resulting in water levels rising by 17.8 mm.

- The glaciers in the Himalayas are melting faster and faster.
- 20 million hectares of forest burned in Australia in 2020.
- Half the world's coral reefs have faded in recent decades.

#### Future effects of climate disruption:

of all plant and animal species risk extinction



### 72 million

jobs will have been lost worldwide in 2030

### **250** million

people may have been forced to move in 2050

### 600 million

more people may be suffering from malnutrition in 2080

## 250,000

more people will die every year due to heat, malaria, diarrhoea and malnutrition between 2030 and 2050

### The climate crisis is already happening

The mean temperature of the Earth has risen by around 1.2°C degrees since the start of industrialisation. According to scientists, this increase is due to human activity – primarily emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.

#### THE WORLD +1.2 °C



We have already consumed seven-eighths of the Earth's "carbon dioxide budget", i.e. the total volume of greenhouse gas emissions that the planet can cope with if global heating is to be kept below 1.5°C degrees compared to the mid-1800s



Only one-eighth remains.

### The future climate

The UN climate panel – the IPCC – calculates future temperature changes and has prepared a variety of scenarios depending on how successful we are at combating the climate crisis. World temperature in 2100 compared to the late 1800s:

#### If we continue as we are now:



If climate policies are not tightened, we will spend the planet's remaining carbon dioxide budget for 1.5 °C in less than seven years. Unless we break our dependency on fossil fuels, many parts of the world will become uninhabitable. In the long term, human civilisation itself is at stake.

#### If the world does everything right:



Even if the world does everything right from now on and implements powerful climate policies, there are effects of the climate crisis that we can no longer prevent. In order to avoid the worst of these consequences, we must cut carbon emissions immediately.

Source and graphics: DN, www.dn.se/klimatet-just-nu/Gisstemp/Nasa and SMHI.

# How can the world stop the ongoing climate crisis?

#### "There is no greater issue than the climate issue.

It has to do with our conditions for living a good life. This is the starting point for our work," explains Johan Hall, the person at the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) who is responsible for climate policy.

The hunt for private profit and continuous financial growth that shows no consideration for people, animals and nature inevitably leads to climate and environmental catastrophe. The idea of "green growth" has long been viewed as the solution to the problem. Green growth centres on finding ways to allow the economy to continue to grow while reducing emissions and consumption of natural resources.

However, many researchers today – including the famous climate professor Johan Rockström – believe that green growth is an equation that does not balance if we are to save ourselves from ecological collapse.

Huge reductions in the consumption of energy and resources are required. But despite all the warning flags, consumption has continued to rise. Most of this consumption is done by the world's richest. So in order to reverse the climate crisis and the destruction of the living world, we need to do something about the inequality that is driving it.

According to the Paris Agreement, high-income countries who have already used up most of the world's carbon budget must act faster to cut emissions. Low-income countries have a little bit more time, but they, too, must gradually transition to a fossil-free economy. This requires changes to the way we produce energy, the way we get around and transport things, how we construct our buildings, how we produce our food and what we consume.

The transition needs to be just, with protection for affected workers and communities. Trade unions have an important role to play in this "Just Transition". Unfortunately, far too many unions are not being invited to participate in decisions that affect workers, and unions are prohibited in many countries.

Switching to a safer path demands sweeping changes. Johan Hall, the person responsible for climate issues at LO, divides professional sectors into three groups:



Those that have to be discontinued because they cannot make the change to sustainable production in time (like coal mines).



Those that can change their production to make it sustainable (such as agriculture, the construction and transport sectors, chemical and steel industries). The new jobs that will arise when we transition to a fossil-free world (for example, in the welfare sector, solar and wind power, battery factories, public transport and the circular economy).



Flood in

13 CLIMATE

#### Combating the climate threat is one of the Sustainable Development Goals

#### The UN Sustainable Development

**Goals** is the most ambitious agenda for sustainable development that the world's countries have ever adopted. Between now and 2030, extreme poverty is to be eliminated, inequality is to be reduced, and peace and justice are to be promoted. In addition, Goal 13 emphasises that we must immediately adopt measures to combat climate change and its consequences.

To find out more, see https://sdgs.un.org/goals

### The Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement was signed in 2016 and today, 191 out of 198 countries are parties to it. They have undertaken to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and to work to limit global heating to well below 2 degrees – preferably to 1.5 degrees. The ultimate objective is to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases to net zero. However, even if we succeed in eliminating emissions completely by 2050, this will not be sufficient to prevent catastrophes around the world. The climate crisis is already here and will inevitably get worse, as greenhouse gases that have already been released to the atmosphere continue to heat the planet.

A growing number of researchers believe that it is no longer possible to prevent a 1.5 degree increase in the temperature. As we write this in early 2021, our world is on a path to 2.9 degrees of heating by 2100, acccording to Climate Action Tracker, but we could end up with even higher temperatures.

If we continue in the current direction, quite soon the climate will reach irreversible tipping points – meaning that we will no longer be able to stop the warming process. "Observe the imperatives of a Just Transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities".

(The Paris Agreement)

## Just Transition

**In partnership with other players** the labour movement had a section included in the Paris Agreement that demands fairness when the world is to make fundamental changes to its economies – a Just Transition. It states that we must eliminate carbon emissions at the same time as showing consideration for workers and communities that are affected by the change.

"Ordinary people must not have to pay with their jobs. The climate transition must and will happen, and the associated costs must be distributed evenly," says Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Deputy President of the International Trade Union Confederation.

A Just Transition means that...

- Workers who need to retrain for other jobs must be offered support and supplementary training.
- The transition to a fossil-free society must show consideration to financially vulnerable groups.
- Investments must be made to support sustainable enterprises.
- Particularly vulnerable countries or regions must have access to support via international climate funds.

One key aspect of the principle of justice in the Paris Agreement is that those countries which have emitted the most carbon dioxide must make this transition faster. A Just Transition also requires that lower-income countries and vulnerable regions get access to the funds they need to make the transition to a fossil-free society.

"Through the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we already have a path to follow. However, we also need to ensure that the political will endures among the member countries and other players. This is the great challenge, and we don't have much time," explains Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the ITUC.

The Paris Agreement is not just about reducing emissions, it also looks at how people will need to adapt to a more unstable and dangerous climate. According to the principle of justice, the countries that are hardest hit must receive support in dealing with the consequences. However, the richer countries who are largely responsible for unleashing the crisis have so far not met the demands from the Global South to pay compensation for the immense loss and damage that is already taking place or is expected in the near future.

The richest 10 % of the global population accounts for 49% of total consumption emissions The poorest 50 % of the global population accounts for 10% of total consumption emissions Greta Thunberg speaking at a climate demonstration in Berlin, 2019.

PHOTO: FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

## Resist populism and fear – the climate cannot wait

**Populist politicians deny the** climate crisis. Working closely with powerful lobbyists and the major profit interests of industries that release large volumes of greenhouse gases, they are actively resisting the transition we have to make. Workers and vulnerable groups around the world need a strong movement to demonstrate that we are actually able to transition to a fossil-free world.

Australia, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United States are the countries that release the most emissions – and simultaneously working hardest to block the transition. (However, the new U.S. government has increased the country's climate ambitions.) In Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, Russia, Turkey and many other countries, populist and authoritarian leaders are stoking fear of change in an attempt to undermine climate action. Populations are being terrified with stories of how the necessary transition will inevitably destroy their economy. In Sweden, too, populist forces are attempting to evoke uncertainty and fear.

These leaders and their lobbyist supporters are working to sow doubt about the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate disruption. They may, for example, claim that a little warming is not so dangerous. Or that climate change is a natural phenomenon that has nothing to do with human activity.

They are wrong.

Transition is essential – because otherwise there will be no jobs at all. At the same time, the changes that are to be made must not increase poverty and exclusion, but improve people's living conditions and contribute to establishing good, future-proof jobs. We in the international labour movement must explain to our members and our networks that the climate cannot wait!

"If people lose their source of income, they will take an aggressive stance on the transition. The labour movement needs to prevent this, and there's a lot that the Olof Palme International Center can do to make our job easier. You can support trade unions and work with political parties around the world, so that they can help the professional groups who are facing the disappearance of their jobs," says Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Deputy President of the International Trade Union Confederation.

**During the COVID-19 pandemic** we have seen how quickly the world can change its habits. People stopped flying. Production of non-essential goods ceased. And people all over the world acted in solidarity to limit the spread of infection. We can use the large investments and measures introduced to counter the pandemic to make giant strides in the context of the climate transition as well. We must do so to save our future.

"The world's workers face several, interrelated crises. The first crisis is the climate emergency, which threatens the extinction of the human being as such. The second crisis is widespread fear, caused by inequality. The world is three times richer but 84% can't live on their income and 60% of working families are living on the edge of poverty. Employment is more insecure than ever and wages continue to plummet. This fear contributes to the third crisis, which is the lack of trust in democracy, says Sharan Burrow.

Rhoda Boateng works at the Just Transition Centre, which the ITUC set up to support workers and vulnerable people all over the world. Rhoda Boateng is employed at the Africa office, located in Togo. She describes the challenges that the African continent is facing as enormous. In Africa, the survival of 45 million people is already under threat from extreme weather conditions attributable to the climate crisis.

"Many of our member countries are struggling with widespread unemployment, coupled with steadily falling numbers of union members. We are working for a Just Transition on the basis of the prevailing conditions in each country. We make sure that our members in the African countries have the knowledge they need to play an active and powerful role in the necessary transition," says Rhoda Boateng. "You talk about environmental pollution. It's enough to poop every other day. That will be better for the whole world."

Jair Bolsonaro, August 2019

"It's freezing in New York – where the hell is global warming?" Donald Trump, January 2020

"No-one explained to Greta that the modern world is complicated and complex." Vladimir Putin, October 2019

# Smart solutions

New technical solutions do not eliminate the need for systemic changes to our economies, but they are an important part of the climate transition. These have to do with developing new technology, or switching to technology that already exists – making better use of solar and wind energy for example, or using electric engines in cars.

Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Deputy President of the International Trade Union Confederation, sees a way forward if certain countries demonstrate how and where we can make a transition.

"We have to view it like a locomotive pulling wagons. Higher-income countries such as Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States – countries that have the financial conditions to make the technology cheaper – should take the lead and pull the other wagons along."

In Sweden, the steel industry accounts for 11 percent of carbon emissions. One project under way today (which Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson has since gone on to lead) involves the industry working with the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), looking into ways to replace coal with hydrogen. If they succeed, the waste product will be water.

Norway is working on several projects desig-

ned to bury carbon dioxide underground where, after 30 years, it will have mineralised and ceased to be a hazard.

The hope is that this will help curb the climate crisis. However, the technique is still a long way from working on the huge planetary scale that would be needed. Despite that, most countries' climate targets are based on the assumption that it will work, because it allows us to keep emitting carbon dioxide for a bit longer. As climate scientist Kevin Anderson points out: "Perhaps we will be lucky ... but it's one a hell of a gamble".

Meanwhile, low-income countries have an opportunity to avoid fossil energy entirely by implementing renewable energy solutions from the start. Solar power and wind power systems should be developed, and they will then create more jobs. Good jobs that contribute to protecting our climate. Important work is also being done to protect natural forests as well as to plant more trees, greening areas and creating natural carbon sinks.

Agriculture is currently one of the industries that generate the highest emissions of greenhouse gases. At the same time, there is substantial potential in the agricultural sector to reduce emissions and ease the climate crisis, while simultaneously contributing better food and new jobs. The Olof Palme International Center is the Swedish labour movement's umbrella organisation for international issues.

Together with our Swedish member organisations and our local and international partner organisations, we reach hundreds of thousands of people all over the world.

> member organisations

**30** countries

77

170 local and international partner organisations

### The Palme Center is tackling the climate crisis

The labour movement has always taken the lead when it comes to progressive politics and societal development. The Olof Palme International Center is working to develop and reinforce the role of the labour movement in the global transition to sustainable development.

With our support, civil society organisations, trade unions and political parties all over the world are developing their own **trainings, campaigns and policies** to bring about the necessary transition.

Through **lobbying**, **alliance-building and communication**, the Olof Palme International Center is also putting a Just Transition on the agenda, in Sweden and abroad.

- We support organisations in civil society – because the climate crisis will have the biggest impact on those who are already socially and economically vulnerable, so solutions need to come from the bottom up.
- We support trade unions in putting pressure on companies to make the change and to take their share of responsibility for workers in the transition.
- We support social-democratic sister parties – because the structural and large-scale solutions to the climate crisis are to be found in progressive political reforms.



# Just Transition when Manilla switches transport system

The streets of the Filipino capital Manilla are dotted with small buses known as "jeepneys". They were originally the Jeeps that the American forces left behind at the end of WWII. Someone then came up with the idea of extending these Jeeps and installing benches, creating a new type of minibus. Today, a large part of the population makes its way around the huge city on these colourful vehicles that are powered by old engines that belch out clouds of polluting exhaust fumes.

Bus transport is responsible for a substantial amount of the Philippines' climate emissions. A few years ago, the decision was taken to replace the jeepneys with more modern buses. The objective is to reduce emissions and pollution. Which is a good thing.

But many of the jeepney drivers were worried that they would suddenly find themselves without a source of income. Many of the jeepney drivers are also the vehicle owners and they could not afford to invest in the new buses, which were to be bought by large corporations instead.

The jeepney drivers received support from their union – the National Confederation of Transportworkers' Unions (NCTU) – in making their voices heard. A partner project between the NCTU, the Filipino central organisation (Sentro), the Olof Palme International Center and Kommunal – the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, which organises bus drivers in Sweden – has assisted the jeepney drivers in forming cooperatives. The plan is to save jobs by having the cooperatives buy new buses together.

For many years, the Olof Palme International Center and Kommunal have been supporting the Filipino trade unions' demands that the transition to a cleaner transport system must be implemented fairly. In 2019 the Filipino government finally gave in to the demands and Just Transition is now included in the new legislation concerning public transport. The work to establish cooperatives and buy modern, eco-friendly buses continues.

## "To make a difference, you need to build networks"

**In March 2020,** social democratic and green parties met for the first time in southern Africa to discuss the path to a sustainable society. The conference was one of the activities in a party support programme run by the Olof Palme International Center in partnership with the Green Party support organisation – Green Forum – and financed by Sida.

Representatives from parties in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique and South Africa took part. The Olof Palme International Centre's partner organisation Education and Training Unit (ETU) organised the conference. ETU is a South African think tank and education institution.

"The general public does not have all the information about the climate threat. Much more political work must be done in partnership with the trade unions and parties. We have to educate politicians, civil servants and union leaders," explains Ravin Singh, Acting Head of the ETU.

Despite the fact that South Africa has already been hard hit by the climate crisis with water shortages in large areas and rising sea levels along the coasts, discussions about what needs to be done have barely begun. One reason is the highly polluting coal power, which provides a significant share of South Africa's energy. In recent years, 60,000 people have lost their jobs in the coal mines and the country is struggling with an unemployment rate of 40 percent – which is rising rapidly on account of COVID-19. Nevertheless, 80,000 people still make their living from the coal mines. Powerful groups of lobbyists linked to the industry, the trade union movement and the politicians are blocking any discussion of the consequences of coal for the climate and environment.

Through the new partnership programme, the Olof Palme International Center hopes to bolster the political parties in their work to prepare a climate policy firmly founded on research.

"We have extremely positive experiences of this conference. If you want to solve the problems countries are facing, then it is essential to build alliances. This is precisely what we are doing through this programme," says Sanna Eliasson, Case Officer at the Olof Palme International Center.

One specific issue raised at the conference is solar power. One of the participants spoke of the enormous potential solar power has in southern Africa. It is hoped that the political leaders who participated in the conference will continue to build on the knowledge they picked up about the climate threat and start the work to dismantle coal power.

With the aid of the Olor Palme International Center, social democratic and green parties from five African countries were given the opportunity to meet and support one another in their work to prepare improved climate policies.

### You and your organisation are needed in the struggle for Just Transition

The climate crisis affects everyone's future. The international labour movement and its allies in civil society must show the way and accelerate the work to promote sustainable development and a Just Transition. We at the Olof Palme International Center are keen to do this work with you!

The labour movement and civil society actors working for a progressive development have **the knowledge needed to show the way** towards a sustainable society that simultaneously guarantees everyone's social rights. We have a responsibility to contribute – both in our own countries and globally – to help more people understand that we are in an acute situation and that we must go from words to actions.

In many of the countries where the Olof Palme International Center collaborates with local unions, organisations and parties, **there is a great need for a Just Transition that advances the rights of workers, improves living conditions and reduces inequality at the same time as acting to curb the climate crisis.** There may be no protection for workers in the form of unemployment insurance, no regional support packages and no official social security net. Many countries actively suppress people who dare to organise.

We must be prepared to stand up together for our shared future. How can we work to promote a Just

Transition at our workplaces, in our local communities, our countries and in the international arena? How can we form alliances with sister organisations for Just Transition? As a movement, we have an excellent opportunity to grow and to increase our influence in promoting a just climate transition.

The Olof Palme International Center is committed to **spreading knowledge and arguments** about climate issues. This is essential in generating understanding and motivating action. Above all, however, we want to **participate in and influence developments through new and more working relationships** within this area. This is where our future projects are to be found.

Every union, party, workplace and organisation holds the knowledge necessary to convince others of the importance of a Just Transition.

Also, Just Transition is not a cut-and-paste solution! Transition plans must be developed locally, to fit the needs of that country, region, city or sector. Workers and their unions should be able to influence how the transition is made through social dialogue. That way, the livelihoods and rights of workers can be protected, and people who know their industries can contribute with their ideas and knowledge. Local communities and groups should also be able to influence the steps taken, in order to secure a transition which is both green and just.

To read other articles and presentations, google "Union to Union", "Just Transition Centre", "Global green new deal". Visit www.palmecenter.se/resourcecenter/cso-academy/environment-and-climate for more inspiration and examples of how other organisations around the world are working for a Just Transition.

### The Olof Palme International Center recommends:

- Get in touch with us if you have ideas for activities around Just Transition! https://www.palmecenter. se/om-palmecentret/personal/
- Invite other organisations to join you in launching work for a Just Transition. If you are already in cooperation with the Olof Palme International Center, see if you can involve your Swedish partner organisation and other organisations in your programme.

SURE

### Some examples of what one can do as an organisation:

- Hold shared education and information meetings with staff, partners and networks to discuss the climate and environmental crisis, as well as Just Transition.
- Set goals in your project, operations or programme on how you are going to contribute to a fair and green transition.
- Participate in the trainings that the Olof Palme International Center has prepared around the climate and environmental crisis and Just Transition, and contribute with your ideas. See recorded and upcoming trainings at https://www.palmecenter.se/resourcecenter/
- Hold your own trainings for the target groups that you work with!
- Prepare motions for congresses and annual meetings as support for specific transition measures at all levels.
- Prepare proposals for locally adapted solutions and reform programmes for a Just Transition.
- Design action plans for your workplaces or in your organisations, based on your operation.
- Carry out communication projects in the field of Just Transition.
- Open up for national and international cooperation with sister organisations.
- Seek even broader alliances outside your usual networks: Are there other organisations from the environmental movement, for example, in your country that you can invite to join you in shared activities?

# **CLIMATE POLICY** FOR A JUST TRANSITION

The ongoing climate crisis is a threat to our very existence and all future development. The global labour movement is powering what is known as a Just Transition, where our destructive economic system is undergoing fundamental change and being replaced with a new system that is both fair and sustainable. The international labour movement and civil society must show the way and accelerate the work to promote a Just Transition all over the world.

This brochure is intended for Olof Palme International Center's partner organisations. With this publication, we are seeking to spread knowledge about the threat to our climate, to highlight the opportunity that a Just Transition entails for our movement, and to pick up on your ideas, contacts and opportunities to work together to promote a sustainable world!

#### About the Olof Palme International Center

Olof Palme International Center is the Swedish labour movement's umbrella organisation for international solidarity and advocacy. We work globally for democracy, human rights, peace and social justice, in the spirit of Olof Palme. We support progressive movements and parties that change societies and people's everyday lives.

We work in 30 countries with 170 local and international partner organisations.

The Olof Palme International Center has 27 member organisations from the Swedish labor movement, working with social change, trade unionism and political organisation.

More about us: www.palmecenter.se/eng