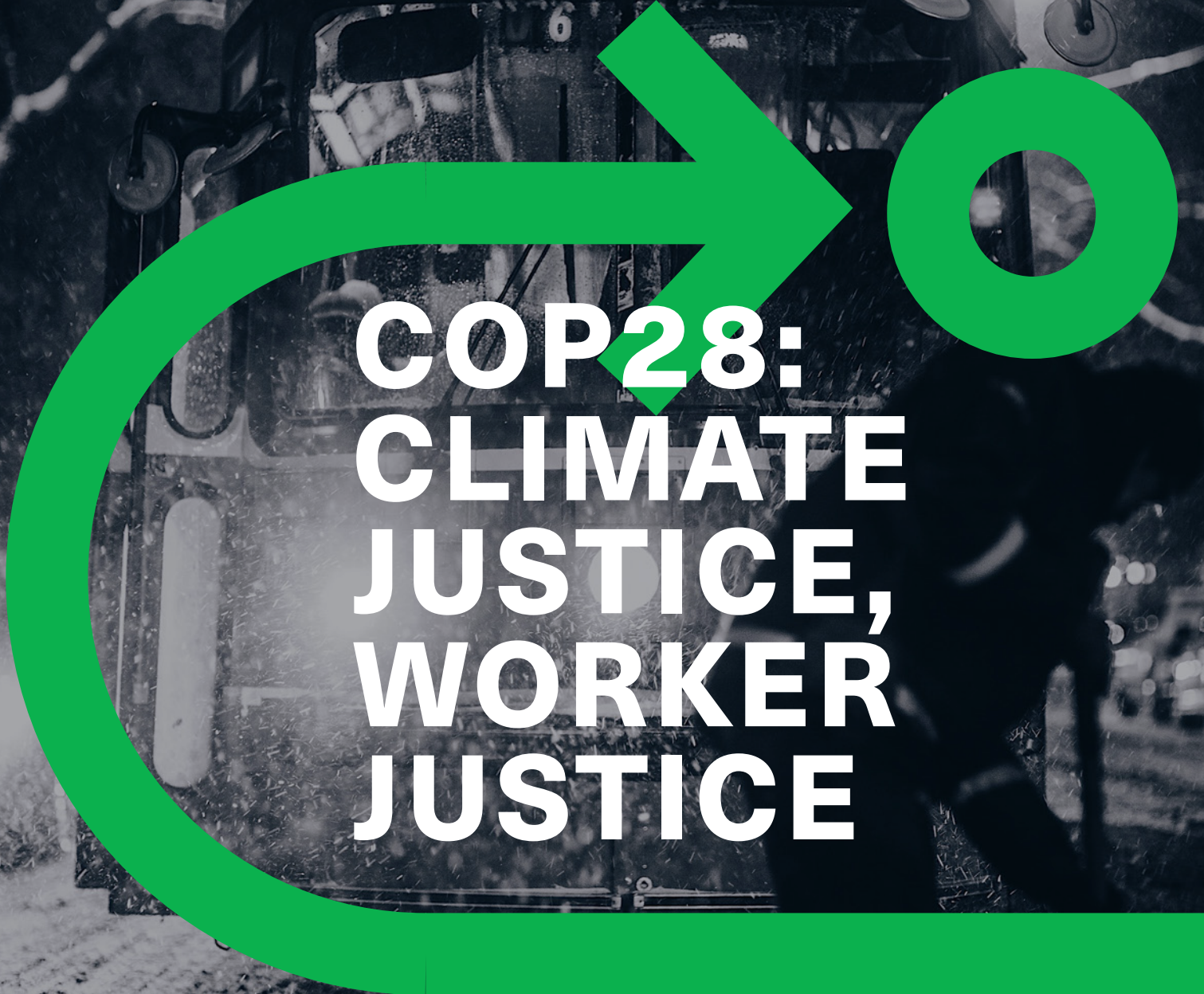


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# COP28: CLIMATE JUSTICE, WORKER JUSTICE

November 2023



**ITF**

**Moving the  
World  
Forward**

**THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS'  
FEDERATION (ITF) IS A DEMOCRATIC,  
AFFILIATE-LED GLOBAL FEDERATION OF  
670 TRADE UNIONS IN 147 COUNTRIES,  
REPRESENTING OVER 18 MILLION WORKING  
MEN AND WOMEN IN ALL TRANSPORT  
SECTORS. THE ITF PASSIONATELY  
CAMPAIGNS FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS'  
RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND JUSTICE.**

**[WWW.ITFGLOBAL.ORG](http://WWW.ITFGLOBAL.ORG)**

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# FOREWORD

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## WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS AT COP28?

Transport unions are taking demands for investment in sustainable transport, just transition and emissions reductions to governments and employers at COP28 in Dubai.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) has identified four key items on the COP28 agenda where action is crucial to enable a worker-led just transition that can deliver the goals of the Paris Agreement: the Global Stocktake, the New Collective Quantified Goal, the Loss and Damage Fund, and the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP).

### **The Global Stocktake**

The Global Stocktake has been a critical process for assessing global and national progress towards meeting climate goals, which will be concluded at COP28. Amidst

calls for a major ramp-up in climate action, countries will need to start working on much stronger climate plans – known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This provides an opportunity to embed just transition at the national level, with clear measures for workers on mitigation and adaptation, and with specific regard to action in the transport sector. Processes must bring together workers' representatives, industry and governments to deliver the sustainable and resilient systems we need to keep the world moving.

### **The New Collective Quantified Goal and the Loss and Damage Fund**

National Climate Plans (NDCs) must be aligned with climate financing negotiations, including the New Collective Quantified Goal and the Loss and Damage facility, to ensure that there is the funding in place to deliver on commitments. Crucially, the principles of just transition for workers must be embedded throughout these key climate finance agreements.

## Just Transition Work Programme

We need a JTWP to make up for lost time and to put workers at the centre of climate action. At COP28 we will be asking for a concrete commitment for implementation of the programme. We need agreement that it will cover a just transition for transport workers for all sectors in all countries. There must be a link with the International Labour Organization (ILO) framework on just transition. Consultation with workers and other key stakeholders must be built into the programme.

## TRANSPORT WORKERS LEADING ON CLIMATE ACTION

Transport workers are on the frontline of climate change. July 2023 was the hottest month ever recorded, resulting in at least 61,000 deaths in Europe alone.<sup>1</sup> Global warming is also responsible for increasingly deadly floods.<sup>2</sup> September saw severe floods in Greece, Turkey and Libya, also causing deaths in the thousands. We urgently need to build resilient infrastructure to protect lives and livelihoods.

Only a worker-led just transition will close the resilience gap. We must raise our climate ambition, deliver on climate finance, and commit to just transition at all levels.

Transport workers are already leading on climate action, but we must make sure that the risks of climate change and the burdens of climate action do not fall on workers. The decarbonisation of the transport sector must be rapid, safe and fair for workers and communities. It must create good union jobs, with decent wages and safe working conditions. This is a just transition.

Transport workers and their unions are working with governments and employers to implement just transition plans:

- In Canada, the first all-electric tug will soon be in operation. It is an example of what can be achieved on both climate justice and first nations' justice when workers, first nations people and companies come together.
- In Argentina, the Asociación del Personal Aeronáutico (APA), which represents ground handling workers, signed a framework agreement with Aeropuertos Argentina 2000 to protect workers from extreme weather and to reduce emissions, working with the national aviation authority and key employers in the industry.
- The Future is Public Transport campaign, where the ITF is partnering with C40 Cities and the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) as strategic partners, is campaigning for increased investment in public transport infrastructure and services, and pushing for a modal shift to greener forms of public transport with decent jobs at the core of the transition.
- The Maritime Just Transition Task Force, in partnership with the International Chamber of Shipping, the UN Global Compact, the ILO and the International Maritime Organization, is delivering a 10-point plan to achieve a just transition for seafarers.
- Unions, aviation employers and governments agreed to strategic tripartite action on just transition with the ILO following a technical meeting on sustainable aviation held earlier this year.

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**“FORTY PER CENT OF EMPLOYMENT  
WORLDWIDE – 1.2 BILLION JOBS –  
RELIES DIRECTLY ON A HEALTHY  
AND STABLE ENVIRONMENT.”**

## **UAE IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Despite this progress, there are companies and governments which are falling behind on workers’ rights and climate action. The UAE – which is hosting COP 28 – has no independent trade unions and does not recognise the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

At COP28, Emirates airline and DP World will be in the full glare of the international climate movement.

Ahead of COP28, the ITF is calling on Emirates to take action and establish just transition committees, with elected workers’ representatives, to ensure that workers are co-creators of climate solutions and that their expertise is integrated into decision-making.

The ITF is ready and willing to offer training so that workers can hold independent workplace elections.

DP World is a major player in an industry where a large proportion of their workforce are either outside or in confined spaces such as crane cabs, and heat stress is becoming a daily challenge for thousands of dock workers globally.

ILO research suggests that, by 2030, more than two per cent of total working hours worldwide may be lost every year as a result of climate change, either because it is too hot to work or because workers must work at a slower pace because of the heat. Forty per cent of employment worldwide – 1.2 billion jobs – relies directly on a healthy and stable environment.

We are calling on DP World to work with the ITF to develop an industry-leading protocol on heat stress based on principles of negotiation between workers and management. Every port should have a health and safety committee where policies and action to reduce heat stress are negotiated with elected worker representatives.

There is no climate justice without worker justice.



**Stephen Cotton,  
ITF General Secretary**

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# ITF DEMANDS FOR COP28

## 01. RAISE CLIMATE AMBITION

Governments, business and transport unions must work together to achieve decarbonised, resilient transport systems. Collective action is essential to limit warming to the 1.5°C goal and to achieve zero carbon by 2050, and to ensure working conditions and protections are strengthened as we deal with the climate crisis.

If we are to reach these critical goals, we must fast track both the energy transition with sustainable fuels and electrification and the transition of how we move goods and people to more sustainable transport modes (modal shift).

## 02. CLOSE THE RESILIENCE GAP

Governments and employers must step up and fund adaptation plans to make workplaces more resilient. From railways to public transport networks, from ports to airports, transport infrastructure must be made more resilient to floods, storms, and heatwaves. Crucially, governments and employers must recognise the worker dimension of resilience, with measures to protect workers from heat stress; the dangers of working outside in storms, floods, wildfires and other extreme events; and social protection from financial harm.

## 03. DELIVER ON CLIMATE FINANCE

Governments must fully deliver on the USD\$100 billion pledge and ensure that the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) provides the financing needed for decarbonised and resilient transport systems, and that all financial flows for the transport sector align with a just transition for transport workers.

This requires that financing for loss and damage takes account of irreversible harms to transport workers due to climate change, including deaths, loss of livelihoods, degraded working conditions, and health impacts.

## 04. COMMIT TO JUST TRANSITION PLANS FOR EVERY TRANSPORT SECTOR

Make transport a public good through government action and democratic control with good union jobs and a just transition. Just transition standards must be included in new agreements on climate finance, with consideration given to groups such as women and young workers.

Public ownership of key transport infrastructure – urban transport, rail and aviation – should be a central part of transport plans.

# UNIONS MOBILISING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE AND WORKER JUSTICE

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Actions you can take for just transition and sustainable transport around COP28:

## 01. Track and influence your government

Find out what your government's current commitments are to climate ambition, just transition and social dialogue through their national climate plans, [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#) and [National Adaptation Plans \(NAPs\)](#).

At COP28 the first Global Stocktake will conclude its analysis and determine if countries are making progress towards global climate goals. A likely outcome of the stocktake is that all countries will be required to bring forward the submission of their revised NDCs to 2024. We invite you to use this momentum to establish contact with your government and demand that they increase their ambition in their NDCs and national climate plans in line with transport workers' demands.

## 02. Organise and demand just transition committees

Speak to your members about climate action and just transition. Establish company or workplace just transition plans and negotiate in collective bargaining agreement clauses at company, sectoral and national levels, ensuring that the most vulnerable and adversely affected groups impacted by the climate crisis (such as women, young workers and informal workers) are represented.

## 03. Participate in Global Days of Action for Climate Justice

[UN World Sustainable Transport Day – Sunday 26 November 2023](#)

The first UN World Sustainable Transport Day takes place on 26 November, aimed at recognising the important role of safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all. Show your government and business leaders that transport unions are serious about action on climate change by putting demands to them for climate justice and worker justice.

[COP28 Climate Justice mobilisation – Saturday 9 December 2023](#)

Trade unions and civil society will be stepping up to demand that workers and communities are at the centre of climate policies. Mass mobilisations are taking place across the world, bringing together movements to build power for systemic change.

Look for a rally taking place near you – and don't forget to bring along your union's banners.

**Share your actions with us using the hashtags:**

#unions4climate #COP28 #WeMoveTheWorld



# THE BIG ISSUES FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS AT COP28

## 01. JUST TRANSITION

**We need a global commitment to just transition.**

Just transition is a trade union agenda. The term was invented by trade unions. As we embark on the massive changes necessary across our society, we must make sure that workers' livelihoods, working conditions, and health and safety are advanced and protected. Deepening workplace democracy is crucial. Workers are critical co-creators of climate solutions, and just transition is about making sure the voices of all workers are not only heard but integrated into decision-making, particularly voices of women and young workers.

Trade union campaigning led to the establishment of just transition in international law. The [Paris Agreement](#), the international treaty on climate change adopted in 2015, commits all parties to take: "*into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs*".<sup>3</sup> The [ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition](#) go into further depth, with explicit references to collective bargaining, gender diversity, and health and safety.<sup>4</sup>

### **Accelerating and scaling up just transition**

In June 2023, the International Labour Conference (ILC), which brings together governments, employers and workers, endorsed the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition as the central reference for policy making.<sup>5</sup>

The ILC agreed that the implementation of the Guidelines must be accelerated and scaled up, with industrial and sectoral policies to facilitate just transition, investment in sustainable infrastructure and quality public services, and action across the formal and informal economy.<sup>6</sup> It emphasised the fundamental importance of social dialogue and labour rights, with due attention to women, young and vulnerable workers, as well as mechanisms for dialogue with indigenous and tribal peoples.

### **COP28 an important moment for deepening the commitment to just transition**

At COP28, governments will decide on the scope of the JTWP for the first time. The ITF, along with other trade unions globally, is calling for workers to be the central focus of the programme, and particularly the principles of social dialogue with workers and stakeholder engagement with affected communities.

Read the [ITF joint submission](#) on the JTWP to be decided at COP28.



## CASE STUDY: TRANSPORT WORKERS BARGAINING FOR A JUST TRANSITION

The impact of extreme weather events is felt daily by workers in every transport mode, creating unstable, unpredictable and more often unsafe working conditions. Transport workers are putting just transition, climate adaptation and mitigation as core elements of collective bargaining and are taking steps to address the climate crisis from their workplace.

### Argentina

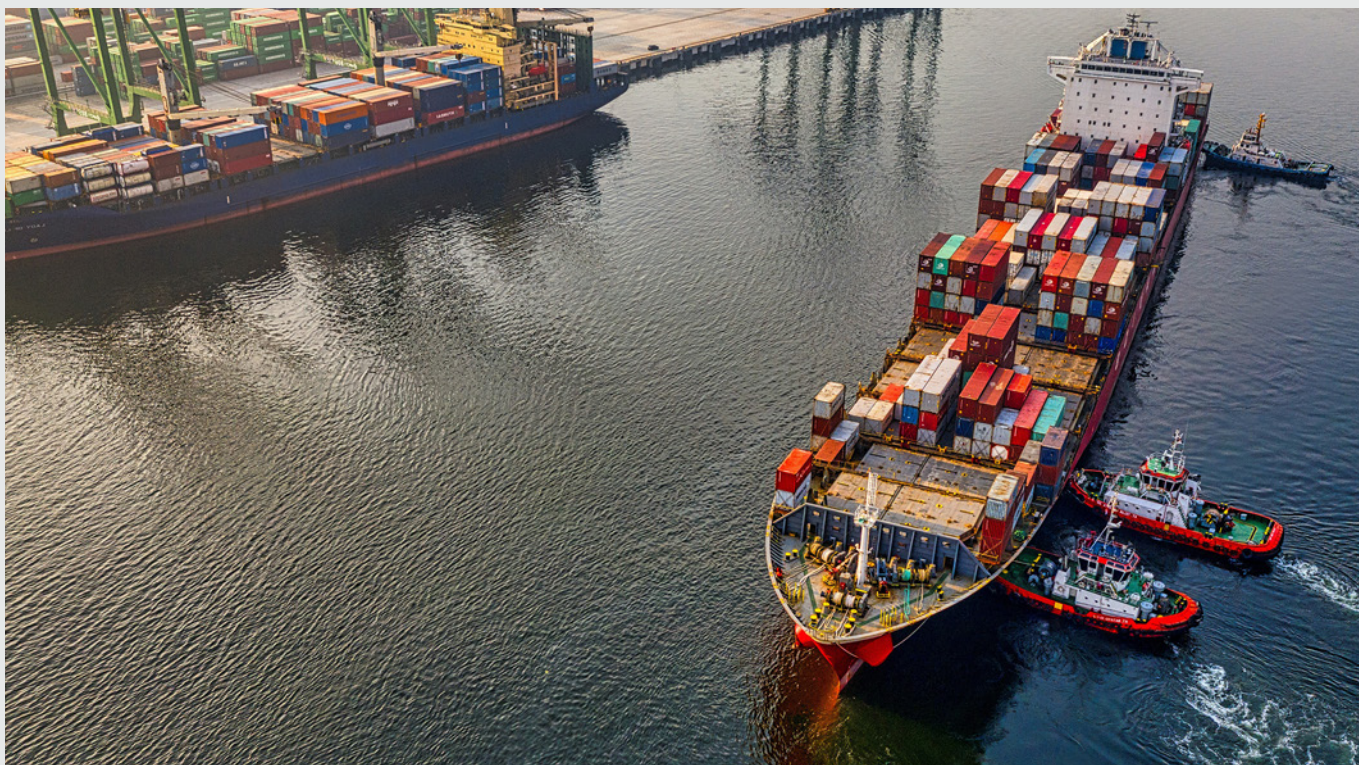
Aviation workers from Argentine union Asociación del Personal Aeronáutico (APA) fought for a safety protocol during electric storms (which will occur more often in a warming world), to supply shelter for workers. The union has also signed a memorandum of understanding with one of the largest airport

operators in the region, Aeropuertos Argentina 2000, which will incorporate workers' voices in decision-making on how to safely make airports more sustainable, including the electrification of the ground fleet.

### USA

In August, the demands of 340,000 rank-and-file Teamsters' union members were accepted by UPS in a historic deal. In a big win for UPS workers, all vehicles will now be air conditioned, and they now have climate-related safety and health protections, including on cargo ventilation, written into their UPS Teamsters National Master Agreement, which is the single largest collective bargaining agreement in the USA.





## CASE STUDY: MARITIME JUST TRANSITION

The ITF launched the Maritime Just Transition Task Force at COP26 in Glasgow, along with the International Chamber of Shipping and three UN agencies – the UN Global Compact (UNGC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

The following year, at COP27, the Task Force launched its first major study on green skills for seafarers. The report showed that 800,000 seafarers would require retraining by the mid 2030s if the shipping industry was to reach net zero by 2050. Alongside the study, the Task Force launched a 10-point action plan for governments and industry to take action across a number of areas, including investing in skills and training, recruitment and retention, gender diversity, and health and safety protections.

The Task Force is now working on the implementation of the action plan with two new projects.

01. An IMO training framework for seafarers on new low emissions vessels, which includes familiarisation for all crew on safety

principles for the new emissions reduction technologies and an advanced course for officers responsible for key operations.

02. A new project on seafarer recruitment and retention, which will be informed by in-depth surveys with seafarers, employers, and policy makers in order to identify the key improvements needed to retain experienced seafarers and to attract future seafarers. The project will also focus on attracting women and young seafarers into the industry and explore opportunities to create platforms for tripartite social dialogue at a national level to identify educational and training initiatives needed to support recruitment and retention.

### IMO Revised Greenhouse Gas Strategy

In 2023, the ITF's just transition agenda took a major step forward when we successfully campaigned for just transition commitments in the IMO's Revised Greenhouse Gas Strategy<sup>7</sup> – the key policy regulating international maritime emissions. It explicitly recognised just transition for the maritime workforce by committing to reviewing seafarer training instruments and ensuring that all new low emissions technologies are safe for maritime workers and affected communities.

## EXPLAINER: MAKING JUST TRANSITION CENTRAL TO MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION ACTIONS

Climate action has two major components: mitigation and adaptation/resilience. If we are to make just transition a reality, there must be a focus on workers in both areas.

Mitigation refers to action to cut greenhouse gas emissions. This is critical in the transport sector, which accounts for 23 percent of the world's energy-related emissions.<sup>8</sup> Mitigation activities include a range of measures, such as introducing new technologies, switching to alternative fuels and energy sources, and a modal shift from higher to lower emitting transport modes.

Mitigation activities create a number of risks for workers, such as the risks to health and safety, the threat of job losses, the erosion of working standards, and potential increases in work intensity and working hours. Mitigation measures also create opportunities for workers, such as job creation in green industries and sectors, and greater involvement in decision making.

Adaptation or resilience actions refer to measures to address the impacts of climate change that are already here. Adaptation is a worker issue because workers are at increasing risk of heat stress, physical danger from extreme weather, and loss of income due to the damage inflicted by extreme climate events.

**Just transition must be part of delivering both mitigation and adaptation measures.**

This must take place with full engagement with workers, including through social dialogue, labour impact assessments and collective bargaining that together encompass:

- **Climate mitigation actions:** Workers must be central to decision-making on key issues including new jobs, job losses or shifts, training and/or the introduction of new technologies.
- **Climate adaptation actions:** Workers and their unions must be involved in working with employers and governments to establish alerts and protocols for extreme weather events, and to contribute their industrial expertise into decisions on investment in resilient infrastructure, adjusting transport services in response to changing weather conditions, identifying and addressing health and safety risks, and ensuring appropriate social protections are in place.

**JUST TRANSITION MUST BE PART OF DELIVERING BOTH MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION MEASURES.**





## CASE STUDY: LESSONS FROM THE FAILED AUCKLAND PORT AUTOMATION

Experiences in Auckland, New Zealand illustrate how marginalising the voice of workers can have calamitous environmental, economic, and social consequences and should be a warning for companies who exclude workers in the design and implantation of climate adaptation and mitigation plans.<sup>9</sup>

In 2016, the Ports of Auckland launched an automation programme, promising this would deliver environmental, economic and social gains. The project was a disaster, turning the port from the best in Oceania to the worst, putting workers' lives in jeopardy, creating suffocating congestion, and damaging key supply chains. New analysis commission by the ITF puts the cost of the project to the port and wider New Zealand economy at over NZD\$1.2 billion – equivalent to 17 years of port profits prior to the terminal's automation.

### What went wrong?

The automation project was launched after a bitter labour dispute over attempts to contract out stevedoring work, remove worker rights and replace the unionised workforce with casualised labour. Workers flagged issues with the proposed approach to automation and their inputs were wholly disregarded.

As automated operations began going wrong, workers on the manual side of the terminal

were pressured to make up the shortfall. Safety incidents increased, with a tripling of injuries and, tragically, three stevedore were killed over the course of the automation project. Issues hit port capacity, and delays to ships, trains and trucks to and from the port escalated.

By the end of 2021, just 20 percent of ships were hitting schedules, with serious knock-on effects for key exports like chilled meat, which need to be shipped within a short timeframe. As cargo started being diverted due to the problems in Auckland, congestion spread to other ports and wider transport routes across the country. While there has been no evaluation of the full environmental impacts, there will likely have been significant carbon emissions linked to ship, train and truck delays and congestion.

In 2022, the automation project was finally cancelled. The workers whose insights, experiences and warnings were ignored throughout the automation experiment are now working to bring the port back to its former strength.

This case study illustrates starkly the dangers of sidelining workers, both for workers themselves and for driving productive and sustainable operations. It demonstrates the fundamental importance of employing a just transition framework with genuine dialogue with workers from the outset.



Photo: Marcus Kauffman

## 02. CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

### The climate resilience gap and how we close it

With the escalating climate crisis, it is becoming clear that many transport systems are unable to withstand current and projected climate impacts. To ensure that transport infrastructure is resilient to extreme weather events and natural disasters, there is an urgent need to plan, build, upgrade, adapt and maintain these systems.

For transport workers, the resilience gap in transport means not only health and safety risks and unsuitable working conditions, but also loss of jobs and social protections.

Currently very few national climate action plans on adaptation mention transport. Analysis by the ITF found that out of 194 Nationally Determined Contributions only 22 percent mention transport adaptation.<sup>10</sup> Out of the 43 that do mention transport, only 17 mention transport in any detail under adaptation. Shockingly, not a single national climate action plan mentions transport workers. Additionally, out of 46 National Adaptation Plans, only 11 mention transport.

It is important this gap is addressed.

The conclusion of the first Global Stocktake at COP28 and the new round of NDCs which will follow in 2024 will provide an opportunity to set out more ambitious, specific and consistent plans which close the resilience gap for transport and, crucially, protect the workers on whom our transport systems depend.





The Middle East and North Africa region has already passed the 1.5°C threshold. Over the past three decades, temperatures in the region have risen by 1.5°C, twice the global average rise, and climate harms are accelerating.<sup>11</sup> Countries are seeing temperatures spike above 50°C, with warnings that four months of extreme heat per year could become a future norm.<sup>12</sup>

The Arab World is acutely vulnerable, with the region projected to be the first which could run out of water.<sup>13</sup> Extreme weather events, from cyclones and floods to sandstorms, wildfires and droughts, have ramped up in intensity, frequency and duration, leading to major ramifications for workers.<sup>14</sup>

### **Cairo, Egypt**

In Cairo, three trade unions, the General Union of Public Transport Authority Workers, the General Union of Road Transport and the General Union of Transport Workers and Services, have worked collectively with environmental specialists to research the impacts of temperatures increases on transport workers.<sup>15</sup> Health issues such as heat stroke, thermal stress and skin and respiratory problems have been identified. Transport workers also raised concerns over whether equipment, vehicles and service operations are fit for new climate realities

and the lack of social protections. This work has highlighted the need for investment in and changes to transport systems, prioritising occupational health and safety for workers. The unions are now looking at next steps to address these issues.

### **Salalah Port, Oman**

Salalah Port provides an important example of what can be done through joint action by management and unions. Cyclones regularly impact ports on which the country's economy depends.<sup>16</sup> In response to a cyclone warning, a joint Crisis Management Committee steps in, with the protection of the 2,500 port workers its first priority.<sup>17</sup> This creation of this crisis team stems from cooperation in the joint management-worker committee that meets regularly.

In the event of a cyclone, the Crisis Management Committee produces a plan, with measures such as the closure of operations, the identification of areas which may be flooded, the transfer of workers in accommodation which may be more exposed to a cyclone to a safe location, and the provision of food and other services.<sup>18</sup> As the climate crisis escalates, unions and management working together is critical for identifying and safeguarding workers who keep both our transport systems and our economies moving.<sup>19</sup>



## 03. CLIMATE FINANCE

### THE NEW COLLECTIVE QUANTIFIED GOAL

A major climate finance package is currently being negotiated, and the terms of this agreement will have impacts on transport workers for years to come. The new climate finance agreement is called the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG). Its stated aim is to address the finance needs of developing countries to pursue low emission and climate-resilient development. The NCQG will replace the much-criticised USD\$100 billion goal, which Global North countries are yet to deliver on. The NCQG is likely to involve commitments of at least USD1 trillion per year.

The NCQG will be agreed at COP29 in November 2024, and implemented from 2025. COP28 is a key moment in the negotiations.

ITF demands for the NCQG:

#### 1. THE OVERALL AMOUNT MUST BE BASED ON CLIMATE NEEDS, NOT POLITICS

Robust assessments of needs must underpin finance needed for sustainable transport systems and services.

#### 2. JUST TRANSITION STANDARDS FOR WORKERS MUST BE HARD WIRED INTO THE NCQG

Just transition standards must include worker involvement at all levels, from the feasibility, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of all climate-related projects.

Just transition measures must be built into all climate finance flows under the NCQG (including all grants, loans and investments), with appropriate benchmarks, monitoring and oversight. Such measures should include labour impact assessments and respect for collective bargaining rights and social dialogue, including the establishment of



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national just transition committees with representation from workers and other affected communities. Every sector should also have a global just transition task force with tripartite representation.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has repeatedly committed to a just transition for the workforce, and the ILO has recognised the need for all climate finance flows and public procurement to be aligned with just transition objectives.<sup>20</sup> It is essential that just transition standards are written into the NCQG.

### **3. PUBLIC FINANCE MUST FORM THE CORE OF THE NCQG AND TRANSPORT FINANCING**

There is a big push by governments in the Global North to 'mobilise' private sector finance in the NCQG. We must make sure that the NCQG does not result in privatisation by stealth. All governments must have access to the funding for infrastructure and services to expand public transport, cut transport emissions, and protect communities and supply chains against climate change impacts.

Read the trade union submission to the NCQG [here](#) and overall demands for COP28 [here](#).

## **LOSS AND DAMAGE NEGOTIATIONS**

Workers' issues must be kept on the agenda in the loss and damage negotiations at COP28. There was a breakthrough on loss and damage at COP27 in 2022, with an agreement to establish a Loss and Damage Fund (a compensation fund for countries dealing with irreversible climate damage). However, the details need to be agreed. A transitional committee was formed to consider the scope and set up, and as this fund moves forward it is critical that loss and damage to specific workers is recognised.

Workers are increasingly exposed to climate harms from extreme heat to flooding and sandstorms, with knock-on impacts on their health and safety. The price that workers have already paid for climate change must be given due weight within the new loss and damage facility. And, more broadly, the need to protect workers against further climate impacts must be a key priority of all climate financing to prevent further loss and damage in the future.

Credit: Ali Hyder Junejo via Flickr, August 2022.<sup>2</sup>Torrential rains and unprecedented flooding in 2022 affected 33 million people – one in seven – in Pakistan, costing 1,700 lives, pushing eight million people into poverty and destroying rail and road infrastructure across the country.<sup>26</sup>



## CASE STUDY: PAKISTAN'S RAIL SECTOR: WHY GETTING CLIMATE FINANCE RIGHT IS KEY

One year on, Pakistan's railways are still recovering from the devastating floods which put a third of the country under water in the summer of 2022.<sup>21</sup> The disaster was compounded by past underinvestment in rail, against a backdrop of deregulation and privatisation.<sup>22</sup> Post-Disaster Needs Assessment reports highlight pre-existing issues – 'large pre-flood maintenance backlog', 'dilapidated track and signalling infrastructure, and poor management' – which left the sector particularly exposed when the disaster hit.<sup>23</sup>

An estimated 40 percent of in-service railways were damaged by the floods, with impacts on tracks, signalling, embankments, bridges,

stations, service buildings, and residential buildings for railway staff.<sup>24</sup> According to the RWU, the lives, health and safety of workers were put at risk, with many losing their livelihoods, and ongoing delays in paying salaries, pensions and compensation to families of those who lost their lives in the aftermath. Their plight has been compounded by the denial of freedom of association and the right of workers to form and join unions, undermining their ability to fight for the payments they are owed.

Official estimates put the total cost of rail damage, loss, reconstruction and recovery at over USD\$4 billion (1,200 billion PKR).<sup>29</sup>

	Estimated rail sector costs <sup>27</sup> (in millions, PKR)	Estimated rail sector costs (in millions, USD) <sup>28</sup>
<b>Damage:</b> Direct costs of destroyed or damaged physical assets	470,062	1,642
<b>Loss:</b> Associated economic impacts	10,679	37
<b>Reconstruction and Recovery:</b> Includes costs for building back better	719,917	2,511
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,199,938</b>	<b>4,190</b>

**“Pakistan is responsible for [a mere 1 percent] of global emissions. The bulk of emissions have been by industrialised countries. We are the ones suffering from the impact of climate change ... We are offered loans which put us deeper into the debt trap and dependency on external agencies to determine our policies ... There is no money in existing climate redressal mechanisms for workers.”**

**Muhammad Naseem Rao, General Secretary,  
Pakistan Railway Workers’ Union (Open Line)**

However, these estimates consider only the provinces recognised as ‘calamity-hit’ during the floods, omitting wider rail impacts and costs. When the rail system was impacted by riots in 2007, unions found that their loss assessments were significantly higher than the official numbers because they took full account of worker losses, both direct and indirect, and had a better understanding of impacts on the ground. The loss assessments conducted in 2022 do not name rail workers as an affected group, even in the section on human impact. Consequently, the full costs of the flooding and of achieving a future-proofed railway system may be significantly higher than official assessments.

Pakistan urgently needs a sustainable rail system that is resilient to future climate

shocks. But the big question is, where will the finance come from? The flagrant injustice of Pakistan paying the price for a climate crisis that is not of its making was pivotal to the agreement of a loss and damage fund at COP27. But this fund has yet to become operational and as things stand, the country is reliant on loans from multilateral and bilateral donors.<sup>30</sup> This increases Pakistan’s debt burden, distorts how investments are prioritised, and typically comes with privatisation strings attached.<sup>31</sup> Pakistan’s national climate plan focuses on public-private partnerships for rail and the wider transport sector.<sup>32</sup> This ignores long-standing criticisms that this approach has led to chronic underinvestment, which has in turn left the rail system even more exposed to the 2022 floods.<sup>33</sup>





Credit: Kohi Marri, June 2023.

**“The effect of the [flood] losses were felt mainly by the workers. The railway did not replace the workers who were retiring [and] the workload on remaining workers increased. Wages are delayed ... Workers are unable to meet their household costs [and] are forced to strike every month [for their pay]. Management then transfers workers to different postings and place restrictions on them so they cannot stand up and fight for themselves.”**

**Waeed Alsam, General Secretary, RWU**

A comprehensive and resilient rail system is critical for Pakistan. Supply chains for food and other goods rely primarily on road and rail, and these systems are essential for economic development and for communities to access health, education and other services. Pakistan Railways alone directly employ around 63,000 workers and contributes to many more jobs.<sup>34</sup> And a reliable, extensive and accessible system will be important to reducing private car usage and keeping emissions down as the population grows.

Building a good rail system depends on appropriate climate financing. There must be

fair compensation for the loss and damage suffered due to the 2022 floods, and there must be an overall finance package that enables Pakistan to invest in its rail system without imposing austerity on workers and the wider community. Workers have an integral role to play in the financing process, from feeding into assessments of climate harms, to contributing to planning for effective and resilient rail investments.<sup>35</sup>

Read ITF's submission on Pakistan for discussions on the new Loss and Damage Facility [here](#).



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# ITF AT COP28

An overview of union activities at COP28 in Dubai can be found [here](#). The programme will be updated as new information becomes available.

## **The ITF delegation at COP28 includes:**

Stephen Cotton, ITF General Secretary

John Mark Mwanika, ITF Urban Transport Chair, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU-Uganda), @jhmrkmwanika

Bilal Malkawi, ITF Arab World Regional Secretary

Jeremy Anderson, ITF Director of Just Transition and Sustainable Transport, @linesofpower

Juman Kubba, ITF Strategic Researcher

Areej Hatamleh, ITF Arab World Projects Leader

Jas Giri, ITF Young Transport Workers' Representative, Rail and Maritime Transport Union, New Zealand

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49-60 Borough Road  
London SE11DR  
+44 (0)20 7403 2733