

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific****Seventy-fifth session**

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Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda**

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: environment and development**Taking action to combat climate change and its impacts:
how empowerment leads to sustainable outcomes****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document provides insights on opportunities to increase empowerment in climate change action and strengthen synergies with sustainable development at national and regional levels. It contains an outline of approaches to integrating action on climate change and sustainable development through participation and empowerment, such as human rights approach for climate change, climate justice and transformation readiness assessments that promote a whole-of-society approach for climate-responsive policies. It highlights opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation and peer learning and share experiences of national and regional efforts to promote participation and empowerment in support of climate action, including for the development of innovative climate finance instruments.

I. Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement

1. Equitable and effective climate action, that reduces harmful emissions and builds resilience to inevitable impacts, is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Climate action is captured in Goal 13 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and mainstreamed across all of the Goals, reflecting the indivisible nature and co-benefits of climate and development to ensure food security, access to clean energy, ecosystem conservation, and to embark on sustainable pathways for industry, urban infrastructure, and production and consumption.

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** ESCAP/75/L.1.

2. Goal 13 acknowledged the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the primary intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. In so doing, it provided a frame for the integrated implementation of the Paris Agreement, which was adopted after the 2030 Agenda. Parties to the Paris Agreement prepare, communicate and successively update their nationally determined contribution to the global response to climate change, in which they outline their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

3. These synergies suggest that it would be more practical to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and the nationally determined contributions in an integrated manner, even if it requires working across government departments and broadening the stakeholder base. Moreover, both international frameworks recognize participation and empowerment as vital components for climate action and climate-resilient development. The 2030 Agenda explicitly links progress on the Sustainable Development Goals to empowerment and participation. It calls for the participation of all countries, stakeholders and people in a whole-of-society approach to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.¹ Empowering women, children and disadvantaged groups is essential for equitable and effective climate action² and should be a policy priority. Goal 13 includes a target to strengthen the capacity of women, youth and marginalized communities for effective climate change-related planning and management, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States.

4. The need to engage all parts of society and government in climate action to achieve global and national goals is anchored in article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change concerning action for climate empowerment, article 10 (e) of the Kyoto Protocol to the Framework Convention and article 12 of the Paris Agreement. Article 12 calls upon all parties to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information to enhance climate action.³ The Paris Agreement promotes the rights of children, local communities and persons with disabilities and calls for gender equality, the empowerment of women and gender-responsive inclusive approaches to climate action. Parties to the Convention have recognized the importance of involving women and men equally in climate negotiations and gender-responsive climate policies by establishing a dedicated agenda item under the Convention addressing issues of gender and climate change.⁴ Article 6 of the Convention includes a range of activities that are crucial to effectively implementing mitigation and adaptation to achieve collective climate goals and urges Governments to develop education and awareness programmes, invest in scientific, technical and managerial skills and personnel, foster access to information and public participation in climate action, and strengthen respective institutions (table 1). Consequently, activities and mechanisms for equitable climate action that strongly align with the Sustainable Development Goals should be reflected in nationally determined contributions.

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2018).

³ FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, annex.

⁴ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "Introduction to gender and climate change" (n.d.).

Table 1
Elements of article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

<i>Scope</i>	<i>Objective</i>	
Education	Change habits in the long-term	Foster a better understanding of and ability to address climate change and its effects
Training	Develop practical skills	
Public awareness	Reach people of all ages and walks of life	Promote community engagement, creativity and knowledge in finding climate change solutions
Public access to information	Make information freely available	
Public participation	Involve all stakeholders in decision-making and implementation	Engage all stakeholders in debate and partnership to respond collectively to climate change
International cooperation	Strengthen cooperation, joint efforts and knowledge exchange	

Source: Adapted from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Action for Climate Empowerment – guidelines for accelerating solutions through education, training and public awareness* (Paris and Bonn, Germany, 2016), figure 1.

5. Participation and empowerment are embedded in the climate action and sustainable development frameworks. However, mechanisms to enable inclusive participation are widely neglected in national contributions to collective climate goals. An analysis of connection between nationally determined contributions and the Sustainable Development Goals⁵ shows nationally determined contributions in Asia and the Pacific often lack references to Goal 4 (Quality education); target 13.3 on improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity to improve mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning; Goal 5 (Gender equality); Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities); and Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). Nationally determined contributions remain relatively weak on provisions to promote participation and empowerment and reduce inequality, although those provisions are central to the delivery of sustainable development and climate action. At the same time, the potential synergies between nationally determined contributions and the Sustainable Development Goals in other areas of action are clear, particularly for Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy), which has the most connections to targets of the nationally determined contributions for Asian and small island developing States, followed by Goal 2 (Zero hunger), Goal 15 (Life on land), Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) and Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities).⁶

⁵ German Development Institute, Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik and Stockholm Environment Institute, “NDC-SDG Connections” (n.d.). Available at <https://klimalog.die-gdi.de/ndc-sdg/>.

⁶ Ibid.

6. Moreover, the current level of ambition of nationally determined contributions falls short of delivering Paris Agreement targets⁷ and will need to be successively increased. However, the Paris Agreement calls on countries to continually enhance their ambition and submit new nationally determined contributions in five-year cycles. Parties are invited to communicate their long-term development strategies for greenhouse gas emissions to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by 2020. This process presents an opportunity to strengthen alignment with the 2030 Agenda, enhance empowerment mechanisms and integrate education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information into adaptation and mitigation measures. The remainder of the present document focuses on ways to strengthen participation and empowerment for climate action within the policy nexus of the nationally determined contributions and the Sustainable Development Goals.

II. The role of empowerment and participation in combating climate change and its impacts

7. Empowering women, youth and marginalized communities to participate in decision-making and benefit from climate action can help reduce inequalities (see box 1 for a summary of difference between equality and equity). Harnessing the potential of those most affected and overlooked to access clean technologies, reduce their carbon footprint and build resilience against environmental and economic shocks also ensures greater efficiency and effectiveness of climate initiatives. Effectively engaging all groups in a society requires people-centred policies, social inclusion and effective, transparent, accountable and responsive governance, all of which are important for sustainable development. However, the interface between inclusivity and climate-responsive development is complex and often overlooked, and the supporting methodologies and capacities to measure effectiveness, accountability, inclusion and responsiveness of institutions remain limited.

Box 1

Equality and equity

Equality is the concept that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices. Gender equality, for instance, means that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all individuals, irrespective of their sex or gender identity, are considered, valued and favoured equally.

Equity means fairness of treatment for all human beings, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In this context, socially disadvantaged groups in a society may require increased capacity-building support to compensate for historical marginalization. In order to achieve equality, it is often necessary to pursue equity measures that empower disadvantaged groups to create a level playing field.

Source: European Commission, *One Hundred Words for Equality: A Glossary of Terms on Equality Between Women and Men* (1998) and International Union for Conservation of Nature and others, *Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change* (2009).

⁷ See FCCC/CP/2016/2 and Climate Action Tracker, “Warming projections global update December 2018” (n.p., 2018).

8. While empowerment is highly context specific and is differently understood across cultures, it can be broadly defined as expansion in the freedom of choice and action to increase control over resources and decisions that affect one's life.⁸ Empowerment can occur at multiple levels, including the individual, family, organization and community levels. A recent publication by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)⁹ pointed to participation and engagement as being fundamental to the transformations envisaged to achieve sustainable and resilient societies. It emphasized the linkages between better engagement, more effective social learning and capacity to change. However, countries in Asia and the Pacific often lack enabling frameworks for public participation, guidelines for effective partnerships and technical capacity.

A. **Building capacity for equitable climate action**

9. Climate change has a disproportionate impact on marginalized groups, and so the pledge of the 2030 Agenda, to leave no one behind, is a complex challenge. Failing to effectively reach marginalized people and communities has the potential to undermine hard-won development gains. The distribution of development gains and access to basic services in Asia and the Pacific remains unequal, along with protection from natural disasters and environmental hazards related to climate change.¹⁰ Insufficient progress on gender equality in Asia-Pacific countries means that women and girls are more exposed to multiple climate risks.¹¹ Climate change will increase the number of people in the region who are exposed to multiple and compound climate-related risks and susceptible to poverty.¹² A better understanding of the interlinkages between inequality and climate change will enable the Governments in the region to empower those left behind to build resilience and take more equitable and effective climate action (see box 2). Increasing resilience to climate impacts and empowering disadvantaged groups to participate requires building the capacity of marginalized groups and those exposed to growing inequality.

⁸ See ESCAP/RFSD/2019/1/Rev.1.

⁹ ESCAP, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok and Manila, 2018).

¹⁰ *Inequality in Asia and the Pacific in the Era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.F.13).

¹¹ *Gender, the Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.F.18).

¹² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Global Warming of 1.5°C* (Geneva, 2018).

Box 2

Resilience capacity

Building resilience capacity is about enabling people and marginalized groups to anticipate and bounce back from climate-related shocks and requires governance approaches, institutions and policies that are better geared to dealing with risk.^a

- Anticipatory capacity: the ability of human systems to anticipate and reduce the impact of shocks through preparedness and planning
- Adaptive capacity: the ability of human systems to change in response to multiple, long-term and future risks, and to learn and adjust after a shock materializes
- Absorptive capacity: the ability of human systems to absorb and cope with the impacts of shocks and stresses
- Transformative capacity: the ability to take deliberate steps to change systems that create risks, vulnerability and/or inequality

^a ESCAP, ADB and UNDP, *Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies in Asia and the Pacific*.

10. Human and institutional capacity can constrain options for, and participation in societal transformations that may be initiated by government policy but that are sustained and disseminated by the private sector, households, institutions and other actors in society. Constraints may include insufficient investment in addressing vital knowledge gaps at the institutional, community, stakeholder group or individual level. They may also arise from limited financing to sustain critical functions. Effective processes for social mobilization involve participatory approaches that engage civil society in constructive dialogue and public participation. As stated in 2030 Agenda, vulnerable people must be empowered, and they can become agents of change in the necessary transformations to sustainability.

B. Empowerment for climate action

11. Empowerment is an integral part of the transformations needed to address the deep-rooted inequalities spanning across the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The adoption of restrictive laws has limited the space for civil society to operate and be involved in decision-making processes; the consequence is that civil society engagement and participation is shrinking.¹³ This has occurred despite calls by the General Assembly to promote and protect all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.¹⁴ Tackling the underlying power relations in the society by empowering vulnerable groups is essential to address inequality and build resilience. Increased awareness and understanding of the barriers to the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups in Asia and the Pacific creates an opportunity for improvement. This includes facilitating involvement and participation in the policy process in progressive sociocultural environments that create meaningful engagement of stakeholders and expand civic space.

¹³ ESCAP, ADB and UNDP, *Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Outlook* (Bangkok and Manila, 2017).

¹⁴ A/HRC/32/L.29.

12. On the basis of empirical analysis and consultation, ESCAP has proposed an empowerment and inclusion framework that policymakers can use to improve the results of efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The proposed framework comprises the following four synergistic elements:

(a) Rights and justice: as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and which are preserved through rights-based approaches. Rights are the cornerstone of empowerment and inclusion as they apply to all and access to justice ensures there are effective and timely remedies for those whose rights have been denied;

(b) Norms and institutions: the formal and informal processes and structures within society determine whether a person or community is excluded from or included in development and progress;

(c) Participation and voice: the freedom to participate in political activities and community life, to access public resources and services, and to contribute to decisions that impact an individual;

(d) Resources and capabilities: access to the array of services and social protection systems and the capability to control and make choices about their use.¹⁵

13. Implicitly entwined within an empowerment and inclusion approach is the need for engagement with a broad group of stakeholders to support decision-making. Broad-based stakeholder support for change can play a vital role in enabling transformation. Harnessing or shaping shared values and providing the right incentives can enable the propagation of ideas and technologies, and it can diversify and expand access to information, financing and other resources.¹⁶

14. The participation of citizens, groups, organizations and businesses is a vital element to promote the effectiveness of action on climate change at all levels. The example of the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance in box 3 shows how strengthening engagement can promote further integration of climate change into the development planning processes.

Box 3

Mainstreaming climate change through participation in Myanmar

The Myanmar Climate Change Alliance was launched in 2013 to strengthen engagement between the Government of Myanmar and civil society networks, academic institutions, media, national and regional stakeholders and the private sector. The Alliance focused on developing the climate change strategy and climate change policy and promoting further integration of climate change into development planning. A participatory process brought together various stakeholders, including city development commissions of the three main cities, under a technical working group on climate change. The group provided inputs and advice on the formulation process of the climate change strategy and master plan, and identified six key social and economic sectors and corresponding actions, as well as a climate change policy. The Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan 2018–2030, adopted in 2018, contains explicit reference to the risk posed by climate change as well as activities to increase the resilience of infrastructure in Myanmar.

Source: ESCAP and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

¹⁵ See ESCAP/RFSD/2019/1/Rev.1.

¹⁶ ESCAP, ADB and UNDP, *Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies in Asia and the Pacific*.

15. Stakeholder mapping can be used to identify those who influence decisions and those who are affected by decisions. Such mapping can help to identify groups who are heavily affected by decisions but have minimal influence on those decisions; these groups may be disempowered and marginalized. In addition, rights mapping can help to ensure that climate actions maintain the rights of stakeholders. Rights mapping represents the different entitlements of various stakeholders at the community, national or regional level, including overlapping and shared rights, and how they are likely to change as a result of climate action. It provides a systematic understanding of how climate action can create conflict between different rights holders and draws attention to long-standing structural inequities that may have been ignored and that increase vulnerability to climate change.

III. Increasing participation and empowerment by integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into nationally determined contributions

16. Parties to the Paris Agreement have set a long-term goal to increase their ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, foster climate resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The ratchet mechanism of the Paris Agreement (article 4, paragraph 2) provides an opportunity not only to successively increase ambition and effectiveness, but also to include provisions for more equitable climate action. While there is alignment and potential for synergies between nationally determined contributions and the Sustainable Development Goals, the former currently falls short of integrating measures to strengthen education, awareness and capacity to participate, as envisaged by both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda. In Asia and the Pacific, where inequality and climate change impacts are on the rise and disproportionately impact poorer households and disadvantaged groups, nationally determined contributions need to be successively enhanced to include more equitable and targeted action and opportunities for participation.

17. Overcoming current gaps in nationally determined contributions and planning for more equitable strategies and actions will include identifying and addressing the interests, needs and incentives of all groups in a society, including the most vulnerable, and reforming the institutional set-up to enable participation and empowerment for all. Creating an enabling environment for effective climate action includes developing adequate climate policy frameworks, leveraging finance and political will, building institutional capacity and improving evidence and research, but it crucially also includes investing in raising awareness and understanding and enabling stakeholder participation.¹⁷

18. In particular, effective governance should ensure inclusive engagement of diverse stakeholders from national, subnational and municipal levels, including public, private and civil society actors. This inclusivity is critical to obtaining buy-in and integrating the implementation of nationally determined contributions into national policy. Explicitly integrating the delivery of a wider range of Sustainable Development Goals means focusing not only on greener infrastructure and transformations towards resilient societies, but also on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Nationally determined contributions require built-in provisions to do the following: successively achieve equal access to decision-making and education irrespective

¹⁷ Katherine Cooke, Elizabeth Gogoi and Luca Petrarulo, “Overcoming the NDC implementation gap lessons from experience”, Policy Brief (Oxford, Oxford Policy Management, 2018).

of gender, sexual orientation, wealth or ethnicity (Goals 4, 5, 10); build more equitable governance systems with strong, accountable and inclusive institutions (Goal 16); and strengthen means of implementation and partnerships (Goal 17).¹⁸ Each updated nationally determined contribution produced through the review process could set out how this will be delivered, building on existing policies and processes, climate-related or otherwise. The following section outlines how this can be done.

19. Integrating empowerment and opportunities to engage women, youth and marginalized communities into climate action and sustainable development is a challenging task. Many of the processes which will be involved in the promotion of participation and empowerment are well known and well proven. They include education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information and strengthening the role of civil society. Indeed, these aspects are included in article 4, paragraph 1 (i) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, article 12 of the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and many climate action and sustainable development initiatives. The Women's Environment and Development Organization analysed 190 nationally determined contributions and found that 64 include a reference to women or gender. All 64 were non-Annex I parties¹⁹ (mainly developing countries), and this provides a baseline for gender-focused action within nationally determined contributions. In Cambodia, the gender group of the initiative for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries has established a precedent to demonstrate how gender concerns can be addressed by connecting global requirements under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change with national policies and stakeholders (see box 4).

Box 4

Including women in forest conservation strategies in Cambodia

The gender group of the initiative on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD) in Cambodia was set up in early 2014 to build awareness on gender equality and women's empowerment for relevant government and non-government stakeholders and monitor and evaluate the implementation of mechanisms to ensure that gender issues are incorporated and appropriately addressed. By protecting women's rights and access to justice, this initiative seeks to foster gender-inclusive practices for tackling forest conservation. The gender group brings together representatives from various ministries and non-governmental organizations in Cambodia to discuss and provide comments on gender inclusiveness in the national REDD strategy. The gender group ensures that voices of women and indigenous peoples are accounted for in the development and implementation of the national REDD strategy through the development of mechanisms such as the gender inclusiveness matrix which was incorporated in the drafting process of the national REDD strategy. The process of gathering data for the matrix enabled a broader understanding of challenges women face in participating and voicing their opinion on national policy in Cambodia. The concerns gathered through this process have been incorporated in the approved national REDD strategy.

Source: ESCAP and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

¹⁸ Climate and Development Knowledge Network, *Planning for Nationally Determined Contributions Implementation: A Quick-Start Guide and Reference Manual* (n.p., 2016).

¹⁹ Women's Environment and Development Organization, "Gender and nationally determined contributions". Available at <https://genderclimatetracker.org/gender-ndc/quick-analysis>.

20. However, the pressing need is to integrate these approaches and to design them in a way which has direct policy coherence spanning both the Sustainable Development Goals and the nationally determined contributions. This needs to be done through a human rights lens and by establishing a portfolio of activities which progressively empower marginalized groups and curtail the cycle of growing inequality.

21. Integrating participation and empowerment into climate action and sustainable development can follow different approaches adapted to national circumstances as described below.

22. **Human rights approach to climate change.** Human rights can be used as a prerequisite and benchmark for decision-making on climate action.^{20,21} This approach recognizes the rights of all groups in a society equally and identifies how they can be fulfilled through policy and practice to ensure that climate actions do not inadvertently increase inequality. Rights mapping can be a starting point for benchmarking all planned climate and sustainable development actions. Rights mapping can ensure that climate actions are conflict sensitive and that climate strategies, policies and projects are periodically reviewed in light of changing conflict dynamics.

23. **Climate justice.** Climate justice²² requires that climate action is consistent with existing human rights agreements, obligations, standards and principles. Those who have contributed the least to climate change unjustly and disproportionately suffer its harms. They must be meaningful participants in and the primary beneficiaries of climate action, and they must have access to effective remedies.²³ Climate justice links human rights and development to achieve a people-centred approach to the climate crisis. The aim is to safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable and share the burdens and benefits of climate change. Integrating human rights into climate action enables Governments to fulfil their obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and under international human rights treaties. Only by integrating human rights into climate action and policies and empowering people to participate in policy formulation can countries promote sustainability and ensure the accountability of all duty bearers for their actions; this will promote consistency, policy coherence and the enjoyment of all human rights.²⁴ Without attention to human rights, some climate change policies and actions could undermine human rights. For example, focusing just on low carbon renewable energy penetration in the grid without striving to increase energy access in the rural areas through grid connection could reduce access to energy for vulnerable groups. Climate justice enables and supports countries to adopt rights-based

²⁰ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Applying a human rights-based approach to climate change negotiations, policies and measures” (n.d.). Available at <https://hrbportal.org/wp-content/files/InfoNoteHRBA1.pdf>.

²¹ For example, the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark is derived from OHCHR, *Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework* (New York and Geneva, 2011).

²² Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, “Principles of climate justice” (n.p., n.d.), available at www.mrfcj.org/principles-of-climate-justice/; and OHCHR, “Response to the request of Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA)”, 1 November 2016, available at <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/722.pdf>.

²³ OHCHR, “Key messages on human rights and climate change” (n.d.). Available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/KeyMessages_on_HR_CC.pdf.

²⁴ OHCHR, “Human rights and climate change” (n.d.). Available at www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/HRAndClimateChange/Pages/HRClimateChangeIndex.aspx.

approaches to climate action and promotes a suite of principles which can be used to assess planned development (box 5).

Box 5

Principles that inform climate justice

Respect and protect human rights

The international rights framework provides legal imperatives with which to frame morally appropriate responses to climate change, rooted in equality and justice.

Support the right to development

Climate change highlights interdependence and must lead to a new and respectful paradigm of sustainable development, based on the urgent need to scale up and transfer green technologies and to support low-carbon climate-resilient strategies for the poorest so that they become part of the combined mitigation and adaptation effort.

Share benefits and burdens equitably

The benefits and burdens associated with climate change and its resolution must be fairly allocated.

Ensure that decisions on climate change are participatory, transparent and accountable

The opportunity to participate in decision-making processes which are fair, accountable, open and corruption free is essential to the growth of a culture of climate justice. The voices of the most vulnerable to climate change must be heard and acted upon. A basis of good international practice is the requirement for transparency in decision-making, and accountability for decisions that are made.

Highlight gender equality and equity

The gender dimension of climate change, and in turn climate justice, must be highlighted. The impacts of climate change are different for women and men, with women likely to bear the greater burden in situations of poverty.

Harness the transformative power of education for climate stewardship

The transformative power of education underpins other principles, making their successful adoption more likely and inculcating into cultures a deeper awareness of human rights and climate justice than is presently to be found.

Use effective partnerships to secure climate justice

The principle of partnership points in the direction of solutions to climate change that are integrated both within states and across state boundaries.

Source: Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, “Principles of climate justice”.

24. In this regard, national parliaments have a crucial role to play in advocating for the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable and indigenous peoples, and ensuring that their voice is heard and their interests and needs are reflected in national legislation and national financial provisions. A good example of such progressive systems is the parliamentary climate change committee in the Philippines. Its hearings allow for dialogue between farmers and development banks to ensure stable climate adaptation financing.²⁵

²⁵ ESCAP, “Philippines national scoping study” (Bangkok, 2017).

25. **Transformation readiness assessment.** This approach includes an analysis of potential winners and losers of climate action and the relationship between different sectors.²⁶ It can help prepare the ground for informative dialogues and broad stakeholder involvement, which are required for climate action and sustainable development. To gain policy support and stimulate action at all levels, it is key to launch a dialogue with civil society, the private sector and potential veto players from the outset and lead an open debate about the risks of new policies and the need for transformation. Engaged and empowered people will further promulgate climate action, thus building transformative momentum and power. Transformation readiness builds on existing global efforts in climate finance readiness, which includes promoting access to the Green Climate Fund, other climate funds and the finance readiness assessment of the Asia-Pacific region.²⁷

26. Unlike many Governments and international organizations, the private sector has already advanced in the implementation of such approaches, suggesting that they provide tractable and practical opportunities. For example, the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark²⁸ is a unique collaboration led by investors and civil society organizations dedicated to creating the first open and public benchmark of corporate human rights performance. The consortium annually benchmarks 101 of the largest publicly traded companies in the world. The 2018 results illuminate a stark gap between leaders and followers in respecting human rights and transparency. A further example is the business transformation readiness assessment, which is used across the world to facilitate business transformation and shows that this can be a value-adding approach to change and transformation.

27. Similarly, central banks and development banks are developing innovative financial instruments, including climate risk insurance for loans provided to agricultural producers, as practiced by the Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited, which allows farmers to remain productive even in years when their crops perished.²⁹ Those financial instruments were developed in consultation with the farmers to meet their needs.

28. Through the approaches presented above, the rights and needs of people, especially marginalized groups, can be identified and appropriate measures put in place. The measures can be drawn from a range of existing approaches, such as training, transformative learning, capacity development and public participation, and these can be optimized through lessons learned across regional forums. This can facilitate a reduction in inequality and form a broader constituency for involvement in climate action and sustainable development. Such tools can be used to help refine nationally determined contributions by further justifying the inclusivity of actions and they can be transparently reported in successive revisions every five years. They can also bridge the gap between nationally determined contributions and the Sustainable Development Goals in terms of participation, empowerment and rights, and can be included in voluntary national reviews presented to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. There would be myriad opportunities for knowledge exchange across the Asia-Pacific region as well as subregional

²⁶ Florian Mersmann and others, *Shifting Paradigms Unpacking Transformation for Climate Action: A Guidebook for Climate Finance & Development Practitioners* (Berlin, Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, 2014).

²⁷ Jale Samuwai and Jeremy Maxwell Hills, "Assessing climate finance readiness in the Asia-Pacific region", *Sustainability*, vol. 10, Issue 4 (April 2018).

²⁸ www.corporatebenchmark.org/.

²⁹ ESCAP, "Pakistan national scoping study" (Bangkok, 2017).

experience-sharing and collaborative initiatives. Further coherence between the Sustainable Development Goals and nationally determined contributions, as well as addressing inequity and inequality through rights-based insights, provides direction and progress to leave no one behind.

29. The three approaches provide opportunities to implement action under the priority areas of article 6 concerning action for climate empowerment. As outlined in table 2, these opportunities could support the design and implementation of more efficient and inclusive climate mitigation and adaptation actions and associated results. The approaches and associated opportunities can be used to update nationally determined contributions in a way that can:

- (a) Ensure the scope of climate actions integrate strategies that explicitly address inequality across the four elements of the empowerment and inclusion framework;
- (b) Support the alignment of the institutional structure for decision-making on climate action to ensure that people who are most affected by the impacts of climate change are represented and have their say;
- (c) Tailor climate action to diverse societal needs.

Table 2
Opportunities arising from approaches that integrate participation and empowerment into climate action

<i>Scope</i>	<i>Human rights approach</i>	<i>Climate justice</i>	<i>Transformation readiness assessment</i>
Education	Increase human rights literacy	Foster broader understanding of climate action	Increase understanding of stakeholder perspectives
Training	Strengthen capacity for rights mapping	Shape climate policies respecting human rights	Cultivate stakeholder dialogue and negotiation
Awareness	Spread benchmarking standards	Improve the identification of who benefits from or is burdened by climate policies	Improve inclusive decision-making
Access to information	Assess risks and challenges associated with climate policies	Make risk assessments of climate policies more transparent	Make risk assessments of climate policies more transparent
Public participation	Design a framework to address trade-offs between climate policy and human rights	Design a framework to address trade-offs between climate policy and human rights	Establish a stakeholder forum on climate change policies
International cooperation	Streamline international human rights standards, share precedents and best practices	Foster international partnerships to promote climate justice	Identify potential winners and losers to avoid trade-offs between climate policy and human rights

IV. Issues for consideration by the Commission

30. Member States, major groups and other stakeholders may wish to reflect on:

(a) The role of participation and empowerment for promoting climate action at the national and regional level;

(b) Approaches such as human rights, climate justice and transformation readiness assessment that promote a whole-of-society approach for climate responsive policies;

(c) Opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation and peer learning and share experiences of national and regional efforts that promote participation and empowerment in support of climate action, including for the development of innovative climate finance instruments.
