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Submission to UN Special Rapporteur consultation on fossil fuel-based economy and human rights

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About this submission

This report consists of a submission by the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment made in response to the open consultation by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on climate change on advancing understanding on how to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights, as well as prevent harm and ensure non-discrimination, in the context of a just transition away from fossil fuels and the phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies.

See details of the consultation here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-fossil-fuel-based-economy-and-human-rights>

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Introduction

This submission is made on behalf of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). This submission has been informed primarily by research conducted at LSE, including at the Grantham Research Institute, and is also based on the authors' established expertise in the law and governance of climate change and human rights.

Several publications cited herein have relied on research conducted using the [Climate Change Laws of the World](#) database, which is maintained by the Grantham Research Institute and powered by Climate Policy Radar. The database currently covers more than 5,000 climate laws, policies and submissions to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), across 196 countries and territories plus the European Union.

This submission responds to questions 1–4, and 7–8, as articulated by the Special Rapporteur.

Key points and recommendations

- Fossil fuels remain a prevailing organising element of the world economy and relate to human rights abuses throughout global value chains. States and other economic actors should consider the full range of human rights in assessing adverse impacts of activities linked to the fossil fuel economy, including the effects of fossil fuel extraction and emissions-induced climate change on marginalised communities, especially Indigenous Peoples.
- The concept of 'just transition' is essentially contested and not yet well defined in law or public policy, including international law and global public policy. Nonetheless, a rapidly growing body of climate policy addresses notions of justice and human rights. Governments, UN bodies and academics should continue to track the development of just transition policies and assess the effects of these policies, including any impediments to implementation, which can be used to draw lessons and support policy diffusion.
- The global energy transition relies on extractivism centred on critical minerals for renewable energy storage. As the examples of just transition litigation discussed demonstrate, such business operations carry many of the same human rights risks found in the fossil fuel economy. These need to be addressed through the continued and enhanced implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, while also considering international standards and guidance on critical energy minerals and net zero emissions commitments.
- UN Treaty Bodies are increasingly interpreting international human rights law to address climate breakdown and the transition away from fossil fuels, especially through general comments and general recommendations. These instruments have the potential to strengthen arguments in climate change litigation and to consolidate international norms that can be enforced through mechanisms like the Universal Periodic Review.
- Independent climate change advisory bodies can provide authoritative advice on climate policy development, including the incorporation of rights-based approaches and justice principles towards the realisation of a just transition away from fossil fuels.
- Mainstreaming rights-based climate action in everyday decision-making can enhance the quality of climate action by improving both vertical and horizontal policy coherence within a country.
- Multistakeholder partnerships remain an important governance modality for delivering a just transition away from fossil fuels and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), including SDG 13 and 14. Partnerships, however, need greater oversight and accountability to ensure effective and inclusive institutional designs, the pursuit of synergies across Goals, and rights-based management of trade-offs between Goals.

- The UN should continue aiming to strengthen partnerships, hold them accountable to their commitments, and assist States and businesses in delivering progress on the SDGs and Paris goals to deliver a just transition away from fossil fuels, including through sustained commitment to UN initiatives like the Secretary-General's high impact initiatives (HIIIs). UN bodies should engage in inter-agency monitoring, reporting and lesson-sharing on HIIIs, and other actors should engage and augment their own commitments.

Responses

1. What is the full range of human rights impacts of the fossil fuel-based economy? What are the systemic causes of these impacts? Who is disproportionately [sic] affected by these impacts and why?

The fossil fuel-based economy is, in many respects, the world economy in its entirety. Fossil fuels and related products pervade virtually all sectors of the economy, and global markets are directly affected by the supply and pricing of fossil fuels. It is therefore difficult to disentangle "the full range of human rights impacts of the fossil fuel-based economy" from other areas of human rights in relation to the economy, including the field of business and human rights. There is no reason to exclude any internationally recognised human rights from a rights-based assessment of the impacts of the fossil fuel economy. As UNGPs note, "Because business enterprises can have an impact on virtually the entire spectrum of internationally recognized human rights, their responsibility to respect applies to all such rights" (United Nations, 2011).

Certain human rights, however, may be at particularly acute risk in relation to the operations of fossil fuel companies and other entities in their value chains. These include: the right to health; the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the rights to life and security of person; the rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the right to adequate housing. Fossil fuel extraction occurs in a wide variety of geographic and sociocultural contexts, with varying impacts across the value chain. In addition to damaging local ecosystems, fossil fuel extraction may undermine the livelihoods of communities living near extraction sites who often do not benefit from revenues derived from extraction and may even lack basic access to clean, safe or reliable sources of energy. Such communities may face displacement, land degradation, and diminished access to clean water. Indigenous Peoples in many settler-colonial states, being especially marginalised, are often disproportionately affected both by fossil fuel extraction and climate change resulting from fossil fuel emissions. Among the risks they face are displacement, loss of land, and disruption of their cultural practices. Adverse human rights impacts frequently arise in the context of States and businesses failing to obtain free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous Peoples for extractive activities undertaken on their lands. For a relevant discussion of some of these issues, see, for example, Healy et al. (2019). Competition for fossil fuel resources can also fuel conflict (Vesco et al., 2020), placing further pressure on the human rights of those living in resource-rich regions.

Greenhouse gas emissions, by exacerbating the impacts of climate change, cumulatively contribute to widespread human rights abuses (Boyle, 2018). As such, fossil fuels also pose human rights risks beyond those associated with their extraction and processing. Recent successful climate lawsuits indicate several other groups, in addition to Indigenous communities, whose human rights are disproportionately adversely affected by climate change resulting from the fossil fuel economy. The case of *KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland*¹ demonstrated the interaction between morbidity, mortality and the fossil fuel-based economy, especially among older women. In that

¹ [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-233206%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-233206%22]})

case, a group of Swiss women sued Switzerland for failing to take sufficient action to limit global warming. They claimed that this inaction violated their right to health, which is protected under the European Convention on Human Rights, and argued that rising temperatures exacerbated health impacts on women, who are already especially vulnerable to climate change. The claimants were able to demonstrate the direct effects of extreme heat on the mental and physical health of women over 75 as a group.² The case of *Held v. State of Montana* similarly demonstrates the vulnerability of children to the effects of climate change and their right to a healthy environment (Setzer and Higham, 2024).³

2. What are the current and likely human rights impacts of a transition away from fossil fuels and of the phase out of fossil fuel subsidies? What are the causes of these actual and potential impacts? Who is likely to be disproportionately [sic] affected by these impacts and why?

A global transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy, as well as the phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies, could potentially have adverse impacts on a wide range of internationally recognised human rights. Recent scholarship advances the concept of ‘just transition litigation’, which can be defined both in a narrow sense of human rights-based challenges to net zero-aligned projects (Savaresi and Setzer, 2022) and in a broader sense of marginalised communities’ challenges to perceived injustices in climate action (Savaresi et al., 2024). Emerging research on such cases illustrates key potential lessons for regulating the transition away from fossil fuels and the need to recognise the diverse types of adverse impacts and groups affected (Setzer and Higham, 2024).

Most of the ‘just transition’ cases identified to date focus on climate change mitigation measures – specifically renewable energy projects or mining and critical minerals (Savaresi and Wewerinke-Singh, 2024). These cases highlight how climate policies can adversely affect rights to land, self-determination, and cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples; the right to an adequate standard of living, food, housing, water and sanitation; and the right to access to information, and other human rights, especially if policies are not designed to account for potential adverse human rights impacts (Vélez Echeverri, 2024). The growing body of research on just transition litigation shows that the human rights impacts of energy transition initiatives closely resemble those of the current fossil fuel-based economy, as evidenced by the broader history of litigation against extractive industries. That resource extraction and renewable energy infrastructure projects are aligned with the goals in the Paris Agreement does not diminish their potential adverse impacts on affected stakeholders.

This illustrates that the transition away from fossil fuels is not a straightforward process, but instead one that requires careful consideration and an equitable lens. The shift to cleaner energy sources offers significant benefits, including improvements to public health through reductions in air and water pollution, and long-term environmental gains from the decrease in greenhouse gas emissions (Robinson, 2023). However, energy transitions also expose workers and communities dependent on fossil fuel industries to potential job losses, economic instability, and challenges in deployment to new sectors. The phase-out of subsidies, while essential for addressing climate change, could disproportionately affect low-income households by raising energy prices, making it more difficult for these populations to afford basic needs, like heating and electricity.

Thus, climate policies can affect a wide range of stakeholders including consumers, workers, specially affected communities, and businesses (Green and Gambhir, 2020). A review of 159 ‘just transition policies’ found that 98 referred to impacts on communities while 94 referred to workers

² <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2023/05/15/womens-health-rights-can-guide-international-climate-litigation-klimaseniorinnen-v-switzerland-before-the-european-court-of-human-rights/>

³ <https://climatecasechart.com/case/11091/>

specifically (Chan et al., 2024).⁴ ‘Communities’ is an umbrella term the authors of that study used to track policies that use general terms to describe a collective group impacted by the transition, for example, ‘affected’, ‘disadvantaged’, ‘underserved’, ‘vulnerable’ or ‘marginalised’ communities. A smaller proportion of policies then expressly referred to impacts on youth or children, elderly people and pensioners, women, rural communities, people with disabilities, national and ethnic minorities, migrants, low-income households, and Indigenous Peoples (ibid.). There is thus some recognition from governments that the groups already affected disproportionately by climate change impacts are likely to also suffer disproportionately from policy interventions targeted at climate change mitigation and adaptation. Understandings of what a just transition entails, and the policy instruments needed to address it, will vary across cultures and communities. Moreover, not all governments adopting policies that have been classified as just transition policies in such studies necessarily apply a human rights-based approach to justice or to mitigating or remedying the adverse impacts of climate action on communities or individuals.

While the transition holds significant potential for reducing environmental harm and promoting sustainable development, there remains a risk of adverse human rights impacts resulting from the unequal distribution of costs and benefits. There is a clear need for a managed, inclusive approach to ensure that no group is left behind in the shift towards a cleaner energy future (see Newell et al., 2023).

3. Which areas of international law are relevant to the protection of human rights in the context of the fossil fuels-based economy? In what ways do they support or hinder the protection of human rights in international law that would arise in the transition away from fossil fuels and the phase out of fossil fuel subsidies?

As noted, the full range of internationally recognised human rights may be relevant in the context of the fossil fuels-based economy. Specific concepts like just transition and the wider climate–human rights nexus remain underdeveloped in international law, but there is a growing academic effort to understand how international law is developing to address and facilitate just energy transitions. Several specific international legal instruments are worth noting.

Firstly, many existing UN Human Rights Treaties impose obligations on states in the context of the transition. The UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, through their general comments and general recommendations, offer authoritative applications of international human rights law to the fossil fuel-based economy, including with reference to specific economic actors and to the broader context of climate change. A growing number of general comments contain references that extend the application of international human rights Treaties to both the current fossil fuel economy in the context of climate change and to the transition away from fossil fuels and phase-out of subsidies. We encourage the Special Rapporteur to review all such general comments. Several prominent examples include:

- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women’s (CEDAW) *General recommendation No. 37 (2018)* – articulates an international human rights legal case for limiting fossil fuel use in the context of the gender-related dimensions of climate-related disaster risk reduction (para. 14; 43; 46a).
- CEDAW’s *General recommendation No. 39 (2022)* – applies international human rights law to the fossil fuel economy and (implicitly) to the transition away from fossil fuels in the context of extractive industries (para. 7; 42b; 57c; 58; 60).

⁴ This review was limited to economy-wide climate change policies and energy transition policies, where the policy included reference to terms such as ‘just’, ‘fair’, ‘equitable’ or ‘inclusive’ transition. The 159 policies spanned across 61 countries and the EU. For details on methodology, please refer to Appendix 1 of the report (Chan et al., 2024).

- Committee on the Rights of the Child's (CRC) *General comment No. 26 (2023)* — notes that short-term mitigation measures must consider that delays to the rapid phase-out of fossil fuels will result in greater foreseeable harm to children's rights (para. 98d).

There are numerous additional examples in these and other Treaty Bodies' general comments, and we note a forthcoming Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) general comment on economic, social and cultural rights and the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

General comments are widely regarded as a form of international lawmaking (Reiners, 2021). As such, they have the potential to strengthen net zero-aligned arguments in climate litigation and could inform and bring a human rights lens and sense of obligation to intergovernmental negotiations, including through the UNFCCC process. Relevant general comments collectively articulate the human rights-based responsibilities of States to take more robust climate action, which may contribute to the consolidation of international climate norms that provide a basis for more climate-related recommendations in the Universal Periodic Review process of the UN Human Rights Council and in the Treaty Bodies' reviews of States parties' reports and issuing of concluding observations. Members of the Law and Governance research unit at the Grantham Research Institute are currently scoping avenues for further research on climate change in the work of the UN Treaty Bodies; we look forward to keeping the Special Rapporteur apprised of potential findings.

States are not the only actors with relevant responsibilities under international legal instruments; several soft law instruments compel businesses to consider the human rights implications of fossil fuel extraction and emissions. The UNGPs refer to the International Bill of Human Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights) and the eight International Labour Organization core conventions set out in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as the minimum list of rights that economic actors ought to respect, in addition to other rights elaborated in other instruments depending on circumstances. In the fossil fuel economy, such instruments might be especially likely to include those addressing the rights of Indigenous Peoples, women, children and religious and ethnic minorities.

In addition to the UNGPs, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are an important instrument for the protection of human rights in relation to fossil fuels and climate change. Prior to 2023, the Guidelines did not include explicit references to climate change. Attempts to file climate-related complaints under so-called National Contact Points for the Guidelines against both fossil fuel companies and banks that finance fossil fuel activities largely failed and mostly relied on the human rights chapter of the Guidelines. The 2023 Update to the Guidelines included specific provisions on climate change and the Paris Agreement, and the Guidelines now expressly acknowledge that multinational enterprises are responsible for achieving a just transition. The update also refers to integrating the human rights and environmental chapters of the Guidelines. For an assessment of past climate-related complaints under the Guidelines and a discussion of new updates, see Aristova et al. (2024). Other soft law instruments can also be relevant, including the Recommendations of the UN High-Level Expert Group on the Net Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities (2022), which offered a significant contribution to developing the just transition concept in the context of net zero target-setting and business transition planning (Higham, 2022). The UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals' (2024) Principles to Guide Critical Energy Transition Minerals Towards Equity and Justice also provide authoritative international standards and guidance on centring human rights on energy transitions.

4. Are there good practices or lessons learned in regulating the fossil fuel-based economy that can support a just transition away from fossil fuels? Are there lessons from other sectors that can provide transferable insights for the transition away from fossil fuels?

Policies designed to support a just transition can build on lessons learnt from national climate governance instruments that may have been developed without a just transition focus. We highlight two aspects that can help build awareness of the need for and development of commitments to embedding human rights considerations in national climate policy: (1) broadening the mandate of independent expert climate change advisory bodies; (2) requiring public decision-making on climate action to be aligned with the objective of mitigating negative socioeconomic impacts and maximising potential benefits.

Independent climate change advisory bodies are crucial knowledge brokers that contribute to more evidence-based and ambitious policymaking on climate change (Averchenkova et al., 2021a; 2021b). They can provide depoliticised and timely information to policymakers, which push for more ambitious yet fair action. A review of parliamentary records from 2008 to 2018 in the UK, for example, found that the Climate Change Committee's recommendations have been widely used by politicians across the political spectrum (Averchenkova et al., 2021b). As a source of trusted information, these bodies can help ensure the delivery of a just transition by monitoring the implications of policies aimed at transitioning away from fossil fuels, and how these may exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities or create new impacts (see for example, the Scottish Just Transition Commission's reports on the energy transition in Shetland). Equally, they can provide expert advice on how to create opportunities in the transition, which address these imbalances. Whilst these bodies may themselves provide scrutiny and advice to governments on the development of just transition measures, they also act as important convenors, and commission reports from other sources of expertise beyond climate change, for example, human rights (including labour rights) experts, or those engaged in inequalities research.

An impartial voice can also help increase public engagement on challenging policy issues, like the phasing out of fossil fuels and how this process may affect local communities, helping to promote public acceptance of climate action and cultivate popular legitimacy. Recent research from the Grantham Research Institute on New Zealand, for example, found that the country's Climate Change Commission has been instrumental in advancing debates on agricultural emissions, a high-emitting and culturally significant sector, which has long been the subject of intense political debate (Averchenkova et al., 2024a). One interviewee described the Commission as being able to address "issues that politically aren't possible ... that would never get signed off from a government department" (Averchenkova et al., 2024b). Yet, although there is some evidence of emerging "just transition commissions" (Heffron, 2021), many countries still lack such bodies (Scheer et al., 2024).

Climate and just transition considerations cut across many sectors and levels of governance. Assessments of the impacts of national climate governance instruments have shown that for effective policymaking, there is a need for mechanisms that enhance integration and improve coherence among policies (Sridhar et al., 2022). Our study on the impacts of climate change legislation in Ireland found that, requiring public bodies to align their day-to-day decisions with national climate objectives has helped to create decentralised accountability for climate action and may contribute to reducing contradictions between national and subnational government policies (Averchenkova et al., 2024a; Averchenkova et al., 2024b). Multiple interviewees attributed this impact to strong and clear language in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, which requires all public bodies to perform their functions in a manner "consistent with" the most recent approved national climate action plan; long-term climate action strategy; national adaptation framework and sectoral plans; and national climate objectives (see Section 15 of the Act). There is also a requirement for local climate action plans to be consistent with national plans – see Section 14B of the Act. Daily decisions by public authorities, such as planning authorities that approve energy projects, are also important: the more precisely their mandates

are aligned with national climate commitments, the more likely they are to result in climate goal-aligned decisions across government.

Depending on a country's legal and governance systems, there may be opportunities to leverage such provisions to help mainstream human rights-based just transition principles into public decision-making. The Irish Act has separate obligations on the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and on the Government to "have regard to" climate justice and the need to maximise employment opportunities and support persons that may be negatively affected by the transition⁵ when preparing climate action plans and strategies; yet this requirement does not cascade to all public sector bodies and does not require them to act consistently with these principles each time a decision is made (unlike the Section 15 requirement). While [over 60 countries](#) around the world have now introduced 'climate change framework laws' to tackle mitigation and/or adaptation, very few of these set out procedures for public bodies to identify and mitigate human rights impacts of decisions taken to transition away from fossil fuels. Elevating the importance of considering these impacts in a law designed to establish the strategic direction for national climate policy can help facilitate desirable social outcomes and prevent silos from forming between the ministries and subnational authorities involved.

Notably, it is difficult to identify concrete examples from other transitions *away from* energy sources. Some scholars argue that a complete transition away from, or phase-out of, any particular energy source is unprecedented in human history, with most energy innovations leading only to additionality, and there is broad consensus that any historical energy transitions have been tortuous affairs that can take centuries (Fouquet and Pearson, 2012). The policies and legal instruments identified here, however, offer insights on promising regulatory avenues to a fossil-free future.

7. How can States, business and UN bodies contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 13 and 14, in the context of a just transition away from fossil fuels and fossil fuel phase out?

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on all societal actors to deliver the 17 SDGs, including civil society and the private sector, but States retain overall responsibility for implementation. States, business and UN bodies, are called on to work together through a 'revitalisation' of the Global Partnership for sustainable development, especially through the establishment of multistakeholder partnerships (MSPs), which have proliferated since the launch of the Agenda (Higham et al., 2024). Our answer therefore focuses on how these entities can contribute to the aims in the question via their participation in, or creation and governance of, MSPs.

A series of UN reports since at least 2023 show that progress on the SDGs is severely off track and even backsliding. A recent assessment of SDG partnerships, led by a scholar at the Grantham Research Institute, took stock of academic research on MSPs and their potential to help achieve the SDGs (Higham et al., 2024). The assessment found that, despite exhibiting modest improvements in effectiveness and legitimacy compared with earlier MSPs, SDG partnerships continue to be largely unrepresentative of important stakeholder groups and marginalised communities and lacking in transparency and accountability. These shortcomings could likely hinder the realisation of a just transition away from fossil fuels as part of SDG attainment.

Experts widely regard synergies across Goals as critical to delivering sustainability transformations on a global scale, and MSPs should in theory be well positioned to deliver synergies by bringing together actors from different sectors. Achievement of the SDGs would contribute significantly to delivering a just energy transition. Indeed, the UN has repeatedly articulated that the SDGs are closely linked to human rights, poverty eradication, and the Paris Agreement temperature and

⁵ See Section 6 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, as amended by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

emissions goals, and that human rights-based multistakeholder initiatives are essential to their realisation (United Nations, 2024). Yet Higham et al. (2024) found that SDG partnerships tend to be insufficiently engaged in generating synergies and managing trade-offs between SDGs. The authors explain that previous academic research shows MSPs especially neglect SDG 14 and are less likely to pursue synergies related to this goal, although it also may have fewer trade-offs with other SDGs. Numerous studies show that MSPs consider SDG 13 to have among the most synergies and most trade-offs of the Goals (Higham et al., 2024).

To make MSPs more effective in contributing to achieving the SDGs and delivering sustainability transformations, States and UN bodies could generate more data on MSPs that can be exploited to ensure the creation and strengthening of partnerships needed in particular contexts to deliver progress. UN bodies in particular could work to develop more robust and coherent meta-governance frameworks for oversight of MSPs to ensure that they are targeted at effective SDG attainment and that they are held accountable for delivering on their promise (Higham et al., 2024).

Ongoing research at the Grantham Research Institute focuses on UN efforts to orchestrate more effective multistakeholder action to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and salvage the 2030 Agenda and related climate goals (Higham and Bäckstrand, forthcoming). Many UN bodies, steered by an initiative from the Secretary-General, have taken on a greater orchestrating role through 12 new [high impact initiatives](#) (HIIIs) that were launched at the 2023 SDG Summit. These HIIIs largely focus on promoting and strengthening MSPs and seek to promote targeted actions that are expected to drive progress across all 17 SDGs, but HIIIs focus on specific SDGs. It remains to be seen whether the HIIIs and this new approach from UN agencies will work, but they appear to offer an ambitious attempt at fostering inter-agency collaboration across UN bodies and promoting action by both States and nonstate actors, especially through MSPs. States, business and UN bodies could therefore get involved in HIIIs as part of a collective global effort to bring the 2030 Agenda back on track and deliver actions that promote progress across SDGs.

The Nature Driving Economic Transformation HII is targeted at SDG 14, but none are aimed primarily at SDG 13. However, climate action features in the stated aims of numerous HIIIs, and the Energy Compacts HII, while focused on SDG 7, is directly related to climate change and a just transition, as is the [Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions](#) HII. State and business actors could explore direct engagement with these initiatives, including by making commitments through [Energy Compacts](#), which have specific provisions and metrics on just transitions, and participation in the related Energy Compact Action Network, which is intended to provide an energy-specific parallel to the Paris Agreement's Nationally Determined Contribution and global stocktake processes. UN bodies could also track, report and share lessons from HIIIs as a potential model for exerting oversight and governance of MSPs to enhance their effectiveness and legitimacy in both the short and long terms.

8. Are there proposals to scale up national, regional or global action [for] a just transition away from fossil fuels and fossil fuel phase out? And how do these proposals take into account the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, all in pursuit of the objectives of the Convention and the Paris Agreement?

There are many such proposals and initiatives coming from governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders, including academia. The HIIIs, discussed above, are one such recent and prominent case. The Energy Compacts HII, for example, aims to scale up action on SDG 7 at all levels by securing commitments to rapidly expand the availability of renewable energy. The initiative has already secured commitments from many national and subnational governments and private sector companies, including several of the 'Carbon Major' fossil fuel companies. These Compacts usually include explicit just transition commitments in addition to renewable energy targets.

The Grantham Research Institute previously provided a submission to the second dialogue of the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP), which called attention to the need for national sectoral pathways that acknowledge the local context and starting point of emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) (Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, 2024). Although global sectoral pathways can be applied to EMDE investments, they do not necessarily consider just transition elements such as the local human rights challenges, socioeconomic disparities, and development needs of many EMDEs where emissions have not yet peaked, or where the net zero pathway extends beyond 2050. EMDEs may also face barriers to accessing finance if global standards for sustainable finance mechanisms (e.g. transition plans or mandatory disclosure of financed emissions) do not allow for the distinct characteristics and starting points of individual EMDEs. To respect the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, global benchmarks for transition finance must acknowledge the different transition trajectories and allow for flexibility. For example, first prioritising foundational criteria (e.g. basic greenhouse gas data availability) over the adoption of more ambitious elements (e.g. transition plans). Advanced economies should play a key role in supporting EMDEs to develop national transition plans that include costed action and investment plans. The EU has already pledged to support EMDEs in their development of sectoral transition pathways by sharing its experience from the EU initiative for Transition Pathways for European industrial ecosystems, but further support is required (HLEG, 2024). See Recommendation 5 (written by Joseph Feyertag) of our previous submission for further details (Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, 2024).

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