

Nature Speaks: Just Transitions

Webinar 2 - Blurb



Date: Friday 16th July, 2021

Time: 2 PM (GMT) | 10 AM (EDT)

Duration: 1 hr 30

Introduction

There has been criticism that low-carbon development emphasises the 'green' over the 'justice' elements. The COVID-19 pandemic has issued a stark alert to the world at large, that our behaviour towards managing risk needs a good brush up. Equally, COVID-19 has provided judicious cues that an urgent transition towards a green recovery should be the new behaviour that will trigger a new business model.

The African continent is responsible for just 3% of global emissions. The region has industrialisation ambitions with unmet expectations. While most of the global focus has been on emissions reductions, Africa's main Achilles heel is contained in the energy sector. Energy -related stressors, in particular, energy poverty, remains a vexing problem, with over 600 million African without access to modern forms of energy. In addition, the continent possesses enormous potential for carbon offsetting through carbon sequestration from its natural resources such as forestry. Nonetheless, Africa's ever-growing young population coupled with high urbanisation will increase the continent's emissions. The region's emission will grow in line with its development and infrastructural needs. Thus, early action will matter for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Nonetheless, transitions challenges need to be recognised, and countries in Africa already face stiff economic recovery. The pathway towards a green development cannot be fortuitous, it has to be intentional. Pursuing a green transition is a choice and has a price that entails opportunity costs. While Africa's compliance is vital to global climate ambition, who bears the social and economic costs has global implications. Winding down fossil fuel production will have multiple consequences for oil dependent countries in Africa, many of which are reliant on revenue streams from oil and gas. Divestment away from fossil fuels will need to be managed with, speed, scale, capacity and the relevant knowledge and skills to enable and support the timing of the transition. Managing the transitions need to not only reduce disruptions, but it must also deliver equitable and just outcomes. Loss of fossil fuel revenue has resulted in new and additional debts and shrunk the fiscal space for many oil dependent countries.

Whose "just transitions" should we promote – affected workers and communities in carbon intensive industries or states who may have to forego much of their development ambition? Transition to carbon neutral world is not political economy neutral. The orientation of the transition is inherently linked to power, control and autonomy to determine the transitional pathways.

Understanding the depth of the political economy implications of transitions towards low carbon development is essential for more inclusive green transition pathways.

This webinar will discuss the political economy of just transitions, covering some of the more controversial issues, such as the right to use gas as a bridging fuel. In so doing, it is hoped that the webinar will enable an in-depth discussion on Africa's green transition pathways, it will ask pointed questions on stranded assets; and will discuss whether achieving a green transition and doing so in a way that ensures justice to affected communities and countries is possible?

The webinar format will take the form of a debate to ensure a deep and dynamic discussion.

Background

This webinar is the second of a four-part series as part of the Green African Transformation (GREAT) Pathways project, led by United Nations University's Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA) and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The project explores Africa's development priorities, in the context of the new cycle of Africa-Europe partnership, and outlines ways in which the European Green Deal could be beneficial for both Europe and Africa. The resulting [Discussion Paper](#) and [Briefing Note](#) raise questions around political economy issues such as what to do about stranded assets, examines transitional strategies to support Africa's recovery and green development pathways, and whether poses the question of whether natural gas is a strong contender for a bridging fuel.

The project makes use of a knowledge consortium including the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), Adelphi, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and others. Several associated knowledge products were produced, ranging from a series of op-eds authored by a network of high-level Champions to policy briefs and human interest stories.

The main aim of the webinar series is to present the key messages of the project and provide recommendations for Africa's green transition and opportunities for Africa-Europe partnership. It is hoped that this will push forward visionary African perspectives that may lead to higher ambitions for cooperation between the regions ahead of the upcoming Africa-Europe Summit in 2022. The outreach will provide a platform to facilitate dialogue for policymakers, academics, civil society and other stakeholders to better inform policy options and negotiations during the Summit.

The webinar series will be co-convened by UNU-INRA and The Brookings Institution.

Webinar format:

Time (minutes)	Item	Responsible
0 - 10	Moderator frames the theme	Moderator
10 - 30	Speakers present their views on the theme - 5 minutes each	Three speakers
30 - 40	Challenger offers contesting views	Challenger
40 - 60	Rebuttal - Speakers respond to challenger - Challenger gives final response	Moderator
60 - 80	Q&A - Questions from the audience	Moderator

80 - 90	Closing remarks	Moderator
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