

► Just Transition and NDCs in Barbados

A tripartite approach

Developed for the ITCILO/ILO course “Leading the Change: Workers, Employers, and Governments Driving Just Transition through Social Dialogue”

► Executive summary

This summary captures the Barbados Just Transition case for the ITCILO/ILO course. It highlights where climate ambition meets enterprise realities, worker's needs, and social dialogue—helping participants identify peer experiences, challenges to manage, opportunities to leverage, and roles to play.

Barbados context: Barbados is a high-income small island state whose **economy** depends heavily on services, particularly tourism and financial activities. Employment is concentrated in tourism-related services and the public sector. Following years of sluggish growth and high public debt—peaking at around 180% of GDP in 2017—the country has restored macroeconomic stability through home-grown reforms, with a target to reduce debt to 60% of GDP by 2035. Growth is expected to continue, and productivity levels have improved compared to a decade ago. However, as a tourism-based economy and high import dependency for energy, goods, and food continues to expose the economy to external shocks.

The island's **political system** is stable and transparent, characterised by strong performance on governance and corruption indicators within a two-party framework. Barbados ranks among the highest in the Caribbean on the Human Development Index, yet poverty persists, with around 17% of the population living below the national poverty line (2016 estimate). **Demographically**, the country faces a high dependency ratio and an ageing, shrinking population. To address these structural challenges, Barbados has recognised the role of migration and recently adopted full freedom of movement for some CARICOM nationals.

These demographic and **labour trends**—combined with declining labour force participation—affect the country's productive capacity. The workforce is relatively well educated, though skills mismatches remain, particularly in technical and vocational areas. Informality is also significant, estimated at 30–40% of GDP. Most enterprises are micro or small firms, which together employ over 60% of private-sector workers. **Social protection** coverage has expanded in recent years, with new parental and caregiver leave provisions and flexible contribution options for the self-employed. However, significant coverage gaps remain for informal and self-employed workers. Gender imbalances persist in labour force participation and leadership roles, youth unemployment remains high, and migrant workers are concentrated in low-paid sectors.

Barbados is highly exposed to **climate risks**, including hurricanes, droughts, floods, and rising sea levels, which directly threaten infrastructure, tourism, and livelihoods. Like many Caribbean nations, it contributes little to global emissions but bears a disproportionate share of the costs. Energy accounted for 74% of national emissions in 2010, with transport responsible for about one-third of this share.

Lessons from NDC Iterations: Over the past decade, Barbados's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) have shown rising ambition and greater **specificity**. The target of achieving 100% renewable energy and near-total independence from fossil fuels by 2035 demonstrates a strong commitment and technical planning. The 2025 NDC introduces **a Just Transition perspective**, though it does so primarily by referencing external frameworks such as the Decent Work Country Programme (2025–2030) rather than providing detailed actions. It also includes sections on gender, health, social protection, population, and mobility, and raises Barbados's own contribution from 50% to 65%. The document links mitigation and adaptation to the protection and prioritisation of vulnerable groups, outlining several measures relevant to businesses and workers—such as promoting green enterprise development, low-carbon production, and workforce adaptation. At the international level, Barbados continues to **demonstrate strong leadership**, advocating for fairer climate finance and greater recognition of small island developing states' realities.

Policies and Frameworks Enabling the Just Transition: Barbados is advancing laws and strategies that, while not always explicitly framed around the Just Transition, reinforce its objectives. Key instruments include Mission Barbados, a social compact that unites the country around shared goals of reducing poverty, expanding decent work, and building a fully sustainable and digital economy. The home-grown reform effort BERT underpins macroeconomic stability and public-sector effectiveness, while Roofs to Reefs translates

resilience into practical programmes across housing, water, waste, and coastal protection. The Barbados 2035 Plan outlines US\$ 5.8 billion in investment priorities—half expected from private sources—and the Comprehensive Disaster Management Policy integrates risk management across all sectors.

Additional enablers include the Blue Green Bank, the revamped Resilience and Regeneration Fund, new electricity-sector legislation, and targeted fiscal incentives across renewable energy, tourism, construction, and innovation. The updated MSME Policy places resilience, skills development, formalisation, and business continuity at the core, linking enterprise growth directly with climate objectives. Together, these frameworks help firms and workers see their role in the transition. Barbados also demonstrates strong **collaboration with international partners**. It participates in the UN Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) and has approved the Decent Work Country Programme 2025–2030 to align climate, employment, and social priorities under a coherent national agenda.

Roles and Actions of Social Partners: The **Government** acts as policy architect and convener—developing regulatory frameworks, mobilising finance, and coordinating international partnerships. The Ministry of Labour is mapping skills gaps and aligning training programmes with the needs of key sectors such as renewable energy and construction. **Employer and Business Member Organisations (EBMOs)** raise awareness, promote sustainable business practices, support skills development and alignment, and participate actively in national dialogue. Specific initiatives include renewable energy promotion, environmental certification, and business continuity planning. **Workers’ organisations** bring fairness and foresight to the transition. They engage in national reform processes, advocate for occupational safety and health (OSH) and skills development, and negotiate job security during restructuring—such as in recent mergers within the energy sector.

Social Dialogue mechanisms: Barbados is widely regarded as a nation with a strong tradition of social dialogue. The Social Partnership, established in the 1990s, remains a cornerstone for consensus-building among government, employers, and trade unions. It is complemented by other forums such as the Mission Barbados boards, the TVET Council, and the forthcoming Renewable Energy Council, which will align training and certification with the needs of the energy transition.

Challenges: The tourism sector remains central to Barbados’s economy, yet underrepresented in NDC adaptation planning. For employers, the most severe barriers include inadequate infrastructure readiness and regulatory instability, followed by limited access to green finance and technical expertise. **Unions** point to major gaps in workforce reskilling, weak anticipation of green skills needs, and persistent cultural resistance to change. The **Ministry of Labour** highlights challenges in establishing a stable regulatory framework, embedding Just Transition principles across policy agendas, and strengthening institutional capacity, inter-ministerial coordination, and labour market data systems.

Opportunities: Barbados shows strong macroeconomic recovery and innovation through debt-for-nature swaps, freeing fiscal space for resilience and sustainability investments. Its policy frameworks—Mission Barbados, Roofs to Reefs (R2RP), the NDC 2025, and the MSME Policy—align climate ambition with social inclusion. Familiarity with the Just Transition concept is increasing among social partners, supported by the United Nations Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) and ILO initiatives. The renewable energy sector alone is projected to create around 1,500 new jobs by 2035, while the blue economy, waste management, and green construction offer further growth opportunities. Through its combination of international partnerships and strong domestic commitment, Barbados is emerging as a regional leader in climate action—anchored in social dialogue and inclusive development.

Practical Recommendations:

- **Strengthen social dialogue and make Just Transition an explicit agenda item.** Tripartite spaces—such as the Social Partnership, Mission Barbados boards, the TVET Council, and the

upcoming Renewable Energy Council— offer an opportunity to make the Just Transition an explicit agenda item for consensus-building and implementation efforts.

- **Boost financial access and awareness.** High transition costs remain a barrier for MSMEs. The new Blue Green Bank and Environmental Sustainability Fund offer opportunities to finance renewable energy, housing, and resilience projects. Social partners should help raise awareness, simplify applications, and ensure fiscal incentives reach smaller firms.
- **Close skills gaps and modernise training.** Rapid mapping of green occupations and stronger alignment of TVET programmes are priorities. National training centres and online platforms' offerings should be expanded and complemented with short, stackable courses on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and OSH-climate linkages. Redirecting the newly launched Job Registry to highlight green jobs would also help meet future labour market demand.
- **Advance inclusion and twin transitions.** Policies must better support women, youth, migrants, and MSMEs, promoting equal access to skills, finance, and formalisation. Finally, combining digital and green innovation—the “twin transition”—can boost productivity and sustainability.
- **Increase NDC ownership by social partners:** Ongoing tripartite participation in NDC 2025 is needed to ensure that climate actions engage more directly with the world of work.

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► Introduction

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) highlights the urgency of achieving a Just Transition—one that delivers climate action alongside social justice, decent work, and poverty reduction. In Barbados, this agenda is deeply intertwined with national identity and development goals. As a small island state facing acute climate vulnerabilities, Barbados has chosen to pursue transformation through dialogue and shared responsibility, positioning social partners at the heart of its transition toward a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive economy.

This **case study** was developed for the ITCILO training activity “Leading the Change: Workers, Employers, and Governments Driving Just Transition through Social Dialogue.” It supports peer learning among government, employer, and worker representatives by documenting how tripartite collaboration can translate high-level ambition into practical pathways for action. The case aims to stimulate structured dialogue, enabling social partners to exchange experiences, identify joint priorities, and explore how institutional frameworks—such as the Social Partnership, Mission Barbados, and the Decent Work Country Programme (2025–2030)—can anchor climate and employment goals within a coherent national strategy.

Scope and approach. The case provides a concise situational overview of Barbados’ economic, labour, social, and environmental realities; reviews lessons from successive NDC iterations (up to NDC 2025); and maps relevant policy instruments and initiatives that enable a Just Transition. It highlights how laws, fiscal incentives, and social programmes are aligning climate ambition with enterprise resilience, workforce adaptation, and social protection.

The case takes a **tripartite lens**—showing how government, employers, and workers each contribute to advancing the Just Transition. It presents concrete initiatives: the Government’s macro-fiscal reforms and green finance innovations (e.g., the Blue Green Bank); employers’ efforts to mainstream sustainability through advocacy, training, and business services; and unions’ leadership in ensuring fairness, skills development, and job security in the transition.

What this case offers.

- A **snapshot of Barbados’ Just Transition context**—economic structure, labour-market trends, and climate risks.
- A **mapping of policies, plans, and frameworks** linking Just Transition with enterprise and worker realities.
- **Illustrative actions by social partners**, showing their roles in advancing climate goals and sustainability.
- Insights **on existing and emerging social-dialogue** mechanisms that can be leveraged to co-design transition strategies.
- Practical recommendations to strengthen tripartite coordination, close skills and financial access gaps, and ensure inclusive participation in NDC implementation.

Ultimately, the Barbados case demonstrates that sustained social dialogue and shared leadership are not only means to manage change—but the foundation of a Just Transition that turns climate ambition into decent work, enterprise competitiveness, and national resilience.

► Country and sectoral context

The goal is a just transition toward a sustainable, green, low-carbon economy grounded in decent work. Advancing along this roadmap requires understanding each country's economic, social, labour, and environmental context. This section offers a concise, non-exhaustive overview of Barbados' context to facilitate social dialogue.

Economic context

Barbados is a small, open, and externally oriented economy. Tourism's direct contribution to GDP in 2024 is estimated at 12.1 %, while total direct and indirect contributions reach ~30 % of GDP.^{1,2} The financial services sector has become significant, contributing an estimated 10 % to GDP.³ In 2023, services overall represented more than 75 % of GDP.⁴ Other sectors relevant to a just transition include transportation and storage (6.1 % of GDP in 2024), manufacturing (5.6 %), construction (5.3 %), energy and water supply (2.5 %), and agriculture and fishing (1.8 %).⁵ The public sector, including education and health, accounted for 16.2 % of GDP in 2024.⁵

Barbados' debt-to-GDP remains above 100%, though fiscal management has improved. In 2017, debt peaked near 180% of GDP.¹ Under IMF programmes, the country adopted measures to reduce debt and fiscal risks, with a target of 60% of GDP by 2035/36.^{6,7} Barbados has also engaged in debt-for-climate swap mechanisms that lowered interest costs.¹ A notable feature of its fiscal structure is the state-owned enterprise (SOE) portfolio, estimated in 2018 at 58 entities, 37 of which are classified as commercial SOEs.⁸

After a long period of sluggish to negative economic growth, GDP growth remains robust. Barbados was strongly affected by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, recording an average real growth rate of -0.8 % between 2009 and 2019.⁹ Following a sharp post-pandemic rebound, growth reached about 4 % in 2023 and 2024, with 2025 projected at 3 %.⁹ Growth has been led by tourism, alongside strong performances in business services, construction, and retail.¹

Inflation is low and close to pre-pandemic levels. In 2024, average inflation stood at 1.4 % and is expected to stabilize between 1.7 % and 3.5 %, depending on the global context.^{1,10} Barbados has maintained a fixed exchange rate of BBD \$2 per US\$ 1 since the 1970s. While the peg supports price stability, it constrains monetary policy autonomy, including interest rate setting.¹ Still, Barbados holds strong international reserves to back the peg, reaching a record USD\$ 1.95 billion in the first half of 2025.¹¹

Similar to other Caribbean economies, Barbados depends on imports to access goods, merchandise, and energy. Imports of goods and services have exceeded exports since 2020.^{1,11} The current account balance, though historically negative, narrowed to 4.5 % in 2024 from 8.6 % in 2023.¹ Key exports include hard liquor, refined petroleum, and packaged medicaments and health supplies. Barbados' main trade partners are the United States; Caricom countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana; Canada (exports); and the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and China (imports).¹³

Barbados' openness and close ties to the United States could shape macroeconomic conditions. While indicators currently appear robust, the outlook may be affected by U.S. tariffs or higher shipping fees.¹²

Barbados can adopt a just approach to its twin transition as it diversifies growth and strengthens resilience. Recommendations have emphasised diversifying the tourism portfolio (eco- and health-related niches), expanding markets, and advancing digital transformation.

¹ For further information on these dynamics, refer to the IMF blog "Does the Exchange Rate Regime Matter for Inflation and Growth" <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues2/>.

Social and political context

Barbados is the easternmost island in the Caribbean, located in the Lesser Antilles. Its closest neighbours are Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. The official language is English, and a local English-based Creole, known as Bajan, is widely spoken in daily life.

Barbados has an ageing and declining population. The island's population is estimated at 282,336, and it is among the most densely populated islands in the world.^{14 17} According to the 2021 Census,ⁱⁱ women represent 52.5 % of the population, and around 90 % of Barbadians are of Afro-Caribbean descent, with smaller groups of mixed, European, and Indian heritage.⁵ About 30 % of the population is under 25, while 17 % is over 65.⁵ Population growth is negative, estimated in 2022 at -0.6 %.⁵

Barbados attracts migrant workers, but a notable portion of nationals live abroad. In 2021, an estimated 8 % of inhabitants were foreign-born, mainly from Caricom countries, with projections of 12.5 % by 2024.^{5,16} Barbados is a source, transit, and destination country, with negligible net migration changes over the past 15 years.^{17,18} An estimated 25–30 % of Barbadian nationals reside abroad, mostly in the United States and the United Kingdom.¹⁹ As of 1 October 2025, Barbados, together with Belize, Dominica, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, has implemented the full freedom of movement of nationals among these Caricom states.¹⁵

Barbados is classified as a high-income economy, with declining poverty and inequality levels. Estimated GDP per capita (PPP, 2021)ⁱⁱⁱ reached \$19,945 in 2024 (\$25,366 in current US\$), below the Caribbean small states average (\$33,843 PPP) but above the LAC average (\$19,905 PPP) and Barbados' pre-pandemic level of \$18,573 PPP in 2019.²⁰ In 2016, 11.1 % of Barbadians lived below the international upper middle-income poverty line of \$6.85 (2017 PPP) per day, and 17.2 % below the national poverty line.^{21 22} The estimated share under the international upper middle-income line is projected at 9.2 % in 2025.²¹ Poverty has a gender dimension, with women experiencing higher poverty and vulnerability rates than men.^{21 22} On the 2023 Human Development Index, Barbados ranked 69th of 193 economies, one of the highest in the subregion.²³

Barbados' political system is characterised by two main parties. The Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). The BLP has held all 30 seats in the House of Assembly since the 2022 elections.¹⁰⁶ In 2021, Barbados transitioned from a monarchical republic under the British Crown to a republic, electing its first President, although executive authority remains in the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Barbados generally performs above regional averages on governance indicators such as rule of law, control of corruption, and political stability.²⁴ It ranked 23rd of 180 countries in the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index.²⁵

Labour and human capital context

Barbados' labour force is faring better or similar to pre-pandemic times, but remains below levels from two decades ago. In the first half of 2024, unemployment stood at 7.7 %, down from 10.1 % pre-pandemic. Labour force participation was 63.5 %, broadly unchanged from pre-pandemic levels. Underemployment in hours and earnings was 4.8 %, below 2019 levels. Nevertheless, both labour force size and participation have declined compared with 2004, falling from 146,300 in 2004 to 136,900 in Q2 2024, and from a participation rate of 69.5 % in 2004.²⁶

ⁱⁱ The 2021 Census face [numerous challenges](#), such as COVID-19. However, it is used to present shares of key statistics.

ⁱⁱⁱ PPP: Purchasing Power Parity, an economic measure that adjusts GDP or income to reflect cost-of-living differences between countries.

Barbados' ageing population is driving a high dependency ratio. In Q2 2024, around 78,700 adults were economically inactive, up from 64,200 in 2004. Of the inactive, 60 % were retired, 16 % in school, 11 % at home, and 7 % incapacitated.²⁶ All categories increased in absolute terms compared with 2004, especially retirees. The age-dependency^{iv} ratio is estimated at ~50 % and projected to rise further.

Barbados performs relatively well in the region on gender equality indicators,^v yet women continue to face labour market challenges. In Q2 2024, female labour force participation was 60.0 % versus 67.3 % for men.²⁶ Women are also more likely to experience long-term unemployment, reflecting persistent barriers to stable jobs.²⁷ Employment among women remains concentrated in hospitality, retail, education, and care-related services, while men dominate agriculture, manufacturing, and construction, illustrating entrenched gender-role stereotypes.²⁶ A 2020 survey found that nearly three-quarters of private sector enterprises (73 %) reported all-male senior management teams.²⁸ The unequal burden of unpaid care also restricts women's full labour market participation: in the 2021 Census, women represented 78 % of those citing "home duties" as their main economic activity.⁵

Youth unemployment remains a persistent challenge, with rates consistently above those of other working-age adults. It was estimated at 19.5 % in the second half of 2024.²⁶ While no recent data exist on broader measures of youth economic activity, 2016 estimates suggested that 23 % of young people were not in education, employment, or training (NEET), leaving them at risk of long-term exclusion. Young men were more affected (26 %) than young women (20 %).²⁹ Migrant workers also form an important share of the labour force. Still, they are often concentrated in low-paid, insecure jobs such as construction, domestic work, and informal activities, where limited knowledge of rights and precarious legal status heighten their vulnerability.²⁷

Employment in Barbados is heavily concentrated in tourism and relevant in the public sector. Tourism is estimated to directly provide 17.5 % of jobs, while indirectly supporting almost half of total employment (46.2 %).² In the second half of 2024, services—including tourism—accounted for about three-quarters of all jobs, with 27.4 % in tourism-linked subsectors such as retail and accommodation and food services, and 22.6 % in public services (mainly public administration). The secondary sector represented 18 % of employment, primarily in construction and manufacturing, while agriculture and fisheries accounted for just 1.9 %.²⁶ Most workers were private employees (60.3 %), followed by public employees (21.1 %) and the self-employed (18.1 %).²⁶

Informality remains sizable and not robustly tracked. There are no recent estimates of informal work in Barbados, though the informal economy has been valued at 30–40 % of GDP, with labour informality in 2016 estimated at 62 %.³⁰

Market benchmarking plays a central role in wage setting, followed by the minimum wage. The national minimum wage was recently raised to BBD\$ 10.50 (US\$ 5.25) per hour—equivalent to about BBD\$ 1,817 (US\$ 909) monthly—up from BBD\$ 8.50 in 2021. This positions Barbados above many Caribbean peers in dollar terms, though not necessarily in purchasing power.^{vi} The minimum wage remains below the 2023 Living Wage estimate of BBD\$ 2,300–2,500, while a 2023 Caribbean Development Bank survey reported that 65 % of small businesses struggled to meet payroll before the 2025 increase.³¹ Employee surveys indicate wage setting is driven mainly by benchmarking (high relevance), minimum wage and direct negotiation (moderate), and collective bargaining (limited).³² The Barbados Workers' Union (BWU) reports representing

^{iv} The age-dependency ratio is calculated as the share of dependents (under 15 and 65 or older) relative to the working-age population (15–64). A ratio above 50 % means there are more than 50 dependents for every 100 working-age persons.

^v For example, Barbados' labour force participation gender gap (8.9 percentage points in 2023) is less than many neighbouring countries, including Jamaica (11.8), Guyana (22.7), Trinidad and Tobago (17.5), Saint Lucia (13.1). Data from ILOSTAT, latest available year. Barbados also ranks high on various global gender equality indices, e.g., third globally on WEF's economic participation and opportunity index. WEF, [Global Gender Gap Index 2024](#), 2024.

^{vi} Using World Bank 2024 PPP Barbados wage is \$4.0, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (USD\$2.6 & \$4.8 PPP), Saint Lucia (USD\$2.4 & \$4.7 PPP), and Trinidad and Tobago (USD\$3.0 & \$5.4 PPP).

over 20,000 members, equal to more than 15 % of the labour force in Q2 2024.⁹⁵ The public sector, including SOEs, presents higher levels of unionisation than the private sector.^{95 101}

Barbados' firm composition is dominated by small companies. Micro and small enterprises account for most firms and employ more than 60 % of the private sector workforce.³⁴ They are particularly important in retail, tourism and hospitality, and personal services, with some small and medium-sized enterprises also active in construction and agri-food. Informality remains widespread among smaller firms.^{33 34}

Important social protection reforms have been advanced, but gaps remain for certain groups and mandates. Barbados has undertaken broad reforms to modernise its social protection system, including consolidating social insurance functions, strengthening institutions, and advancing digital service delivery. New initiatives such as the One Family Programme and expanded parental and care leave entitlements aim to extend coverage, with more flexible contribution options for the self-employed.^{35 36} National policies on disability and ageing have also been introduced.³⁷ In terms of coverage, 56.7 % of the population is estimated to receive at least one social protection benefit,^{vii} universal health care is available, and 90 % of the labour force is covered by social insurance.³⁸ Despite these achievements, less than 20 % of the self-employed are covered,^{viii} informality continues to exclude many micro and small enterprise workers, and outdated legislation undermines scheme relevance.²⁷ Social protection gaps fall disproportionately on vulnerable groups, including women in informal or self-employment, children (only 13 % under 15 receive protection), low-income households, and migrants with restricted access.^{27 39}

Labour productivity in Barbados has been steadily improving, with stronger post-COVID performance. Output per hour worked grew on average by 1.1% between 2015 and 2019, and by 3.5% between 2023 and 2025. Productivity levels are higher than a decade ago and exceed the 2024 Caricom average.⁴⁰

A majority of the population has attained at least secondary education. According to the 2021 Census, 58 % of Barbadians not enrolled in school had completed secondary education, 12 % post-secondary up to associate degree, and 20 % tertiary education. At that time, 20 % of those surveyed were still in school.⁵

Environmental context

Barbados is a small island state with a tropical climate moderated by Atlantic winds. The island experiences a wet season from June to November and a dry season from December to May. Its geography is relatively flat compared with other Caribbean islands, with limited freshwater resources and a narrow coastal zone. Despite its small land area (432 km²), Barbados hosts important marine and coastal ecosystems, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, and sandy beaches, which are vital for tourism, fisheries, and shoreline protection. Its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is ~187,000 km²—430 times larger than its landmass.³

Barbados is highly exposed to climate-related risks that threaten both natural and economic systems. Rising sea levels, stronger tropical storms, flooding, drought, and increasing temperatures undermine economic activity, coastal ecosystems and freshwater supplies.^{3 41} The country's vulnerability is heightened by its geography: most of the population, productive assets, and critical infrastructure are concentrated along the coast, where storm surges and hurricanes pose acute threats.⁴¹ A core structural challenge is the concentration of capital stock in a narrow coastal strip, where the main port and the international airport are located, raising adaptation and maintenance costs.^{119 120} Barbados has already been affected by major

^{vii} The National Insurance and Social Security Service (NISS) extends coverage to employees in both the public and private sectors, as well as self-employed persons. Its provisions include: (i) long-term benefits such as old-age, invalidity, disablement, and survivors' pensions; (ii) short-term benefits including sickness, maternity, unemployment, severance, and funeral grants; (iii) employment injury benefits covering income support, medical costs, and death-related payments; and (iv) non-contributory pensions.

^{viii} Despite the 90% labour force coverage, less than 20 per cent of self-employed workers are enrolled in the NISS. Barbados National Insurance Scheme, [17th Actuarial Review](#), 2022.

storms, and tourism, its main economic activity, remains particularly exposed. These dynamics translate into several main and rising risks for the country:

- **Hurricanes:** Recent tropical systems have highlighted the sensitivity of Barbados's critical infrastructure. The 2023 passage of Tropical Storm Bret led to precautionary airport and port disruptions, underscoring that the siting of Bridgetown, the principal port, and the airport close to the shoreline places key transport, trade, and emergency functions within zones exposed to winds, waves, and storm surge.¹²¹
- **Rising sea levels:** Coastal erosion and reef loss amplify Barbados's protection needs. Inter-American Development Bank assessments estimate potential coastal-erosion losses near US\$ 30 million per year, with the west coast alone losing about US\$ 3–4 million per year; weakened reef structures allow more wave energy to reach the shoreline and, combined with the coastal location of infrastructure, increase flood risk and the need for engineered protection.^{122 123}
- **Sargassum:** Sargassum removal represents a steady public cost and a private burden, especially on small hotels. The Ministry of Environment has reported public spending on the order of US\$ 1 million per year for removal, much of it carried out manually to prevent sand loss; small hotels on the less affluent south coast face additional daily costs for guest relocation, extra staff, and odour management during major influxes. Heavy sargassum arrivals therefore directly compress tourism margins.^{124 125}

Barbados has a low-to-medium per capita emissions, with energy and domestic transport as the largest contributors. In 2018, Barbados released its greenhouse gas inventory with data up to 2010.^{ix,42} Sectoral emissions were: Energy (74% of total, including transport at ~33% of energy emissions), Waste (15%), Industrial Processes and Product Use (8%), and Agriculture (3%). Forestry and other land uses accounted for removals of about 3%.⁴² According to Climate Action Tracker, Barbados was classified as a low per capita emitter in 2024 but reclassified as moderate in 2025.⁴³

^{ix} An updated inventory is expected to be public in 2026 along Barbados Third National Communication.

► Lessons from NDCs iterations^x

Barbados launched its intended Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2015, formalised as NDC 1.0 in 2016. NDCs are national climate action plans under the Paris Agreement, setting out commitments to reduce emissions and to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts. They are expected to be updated every five years to reflect higher ambition, a schedule Barbados has followed by releasing an updated NDC in 2021 and a new NDC in 2025.

Barbados submitted an updated NDC in August 2025, one of the first in the Caribbean. Other submissions from the region as of October 2025, in order of submission, include Saint Lucia, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and the Bahamas.⁶²

Over a decade of work, Barbados' NDC iterations have built progressively, bringing stronger commitments and more detailed planning. This section highlights these experiences as lessons for social partners as they engage further in NDC development and implementation.

Rising and feasible ambition with policy alignment

Barbados has positioned itself as an advocate for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and a leader in climate ambition and reform. It has also aligned a set of policies and plans that support its NDC commitments (outlined in the section on Policies and Frameworks).

The overarching ambition is to become the **first 100% renewable energy island state**. This goal, first set out in NDC 2021 and reaffirmed in NDC 2025, was adjusted from a 2030 deliverable. The new target is 70% renewable share in electricity generation by 2030 and 95% by 2035.³ These updates reflect robust scenario analyses of national policies, circumstances, and financing needs. The Energy Transition and Investment Plan, launched in 2025, identifies 2035 as the most feasible pathway to a net-zero Barbados, projecting savings just in fuel costs of BBD\$ 15.6 billion and investment requirements to reach the energy goals of BBD\$ 19 billion through 2040.⁵⁹

Commitments to economy-wide emissions reductions have strengthened since the first NDC and remained broadly consistent between the 2021 and 2025 submissions.^{xi} Sectoral targets also became more ambitious and clearer from 2021 onwards and were maintained in 2025. For instance, specific targets were introduced for the IPPU and waste sectors, and actions for clean transport were developed as a standalone area rather than grouped under energy (e.g., 100 % of new passenger vehicles to be electric or alternative-fuelled). NDC 2025 also raised 2035 targets for waste management and electricity demand reduction.

NDC 2021 introduced cross-cutting themes such as Loss and Damage, Responses to Vulnerabilities and Risks, and Gender. For SIDS, loss and damage and vulnerability responses are critical, recognising that climate impacts extend beyond what mitigation and adaptation can address. NDC 2025 retained these themes and added new ones, including health, social protection, population and mobility, and **Just Transition**. It also provides, for the first time, detailed financing needs: US\$ 1.1 billion for adaptation and resilience, and US\$ 2.4 billion for mitigation. In addition, Barbados raised its emission reduction contribution from 50% to 65%.

^x The lessons learned are drawn from consultations of the NDCs and a review of sources such as the NDC Partnership, the Second National Communication, and other in-section references.

^{xi} In the 2015 NDC, the economy-wide target was a 44% reduction below Business-as-Usual (BAU). In the 2021 NDC, the target rose to 70% (conditional) and 35% (unconditional). In the 2025 NDC, the target remains 70% (conditional, likely by 2035) with 31% (unconditional). However, when comparing the 2015 and 2025 NDCs against the 2008 reference year, the latter reflects a 14-percentage-point deeper reduction. This difference arises from the restatement of emissions in the base year.

Another key area of progress across Barbados' NDC iterations is the improvement in **policy alignment**. While NDC 2021 referenced several key frameworks, NDC 2025 is more detailed and deliberate. It reflects advances over the past 5–10 years in developing policies and strategies for climate action and transition. Many current policies and plans are closely aligned with one another and with the NDCs—from Mission Barbados as the overarching vision, to successive Economic Recovery and Transformation Plans, and sectoral strategies on energy, coastal management, disaster management, and fiscal incentives. These instruments build on and reinforce one another, demonstrating an aligned and integrated policy framework (see the section on Policies and Frameworks for further detail).

A Just Transition lens

In its 2025 NDC, Barbados introduced key themes directly linked to the **Just Transition**, as well as a dedicated section. While NDC 2021 acknowledged social and economic risks to people and industries and applied a gender lens, NDC 2025 explicitly includes a Just Transition. It highlights Barbados' participation in the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) with a focus on the green and blue economy supported by renewable energy, the intended creation of a Renewable Energy Skills Council, and the launch of the ILO Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2025–2035.^{66 67} Beyond its dedicated section, NDC 2025 functions as a more integrated policy instrument for advancing a Just Transition by including other relevant sections such as health, social protection, population and mobility.

NDC 2025 also outlines ongoing and planned measures to protect **vulnerable populations** from climate impacts, including the elderly, coastal residents, displaced persons, migrants, and those whose livelihoods depend on agriculture, fishing, and tourism. It recognises demographic challenges and their implications for a sustainable economy, particularly in relation to labour force participation and adequate social care. It notes that migration will become increasingly relevant in future NDCs.

The NDC further emphasizes the importance of resilient health systems before, during, and after climate-related events, with a National Adaptation Plan for Health currently under development.^{3 61} **Gender** considerations are also strengthened, with a draft National Policy on Gender being prepared to connect more explicitly with climate change.

A platform for global leadership and climate justice

Barbados has emerged as a key voice in advocating for the climate challenges of SIDS and pressing for stronger action by Paris Agreement signatories.⁶⁸ In 2022, the *Bridgetown Initiative* was launched in the capital city, aiming to reform development finance. Its proposals include changes to lending and repayment conditions—particularly for debt linked to natural disasters; increasing the availability of finance for developing nations to build climate resilience; and expanding private-sector involvement in funding mitigation and post-disaster reconstruction.⁶⁹

Barbados has also used its NDCs to highlight the need for reforms such as:

- **Accounting for blue carbon in IPCC methodologies** (NDC 2021 and 2025): Stressing that blue carbon considerations must be included to reflect the role of ocean ecosystems in carbon sequestration. **Current IPCC guidelines allow the inclusion of tidal marshes, mangroves, and seagrasses under the AFOLU sector, but do not use the term “blue carbon” or include other ecosystems such as macroalgae or benthic ecosystems, known also to capture carbon but harder to account for.*⁷⁰
- **Advancing legal action through international courts:** Barbados lists in its 2025 NDC several initiatives at the international level. These include welcoming the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) opinion that greenhouse gas emissions constitute marine pollution; participating in proceedings before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights regarding states' human rights obligations in the climate emergency; and pleading before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on states' climate obligations. In these processes, Barbados underscores the existential threats faced

by Small Island States and argues for strict liability, reparations, and the broader application of international law to climate harms.

- **Advocating for climate finance reform:** In its 2021 NDC, Barbados proposed using IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) for climate action, including recapitalising regional development banks with unused SDRs from advanced economies and supporting a Global Disaster Mechanism (GDM) to redistribute SDRs based on climate vulnerability. The argument was that it would provide rapid liquidity and allow the refinancing of disaster-related debt. In 2022, the IMF launched the Resilience and Sustainability Trust, funded mainly through voluntary member contributions and SDR reallocation, to provide long-term finance for climate and structural challenges. Barbados has participated in the scheme since its inception.⁷¹

Table 1 presents selected actions from the NDC 2025 relevant to businesses and workers in the context of a Just Transition. The list is not exhaustive, as the NDC also cites additional policies and plans with further measures. The table is intended to illustrate how NDC actions connect to the membership of social partners.

► **Table 1. Relevant targets and actions in Barbados' NDC 2025 for advancing a Just Transition**

Targets and actions	Just Transition relevance
Electricity/Energy & Efficiency	Fiscal incentives to support renewable energy goals; possible new or revised taxes to be levy to balance fossil fuel dependence gaps; battery energy storage system projects with auction processes; introduce and enforce energy efficiency standards for new buildings and major renovations; labelling programmes and efficiency standards for household and industrial appliances, with potential incentives or rebate schemes; energy audits and updated building codes; minimum energy performance standards for air conditioning, refrigeration, and lighting; public-private partnerships for wind energy; exploration of hydrogen power generation.
Transport & Mobility	100% electric or alternative-fuelled new passenger vehicles; incorporation of clean energy public transport options; tax holiday for electric vehicles from April 2022 to March 2026; climate-resilient road infrastructure.
Industry	Voluntary green building codes; transition to climate and ozone friendly refrigerants; capacity building for refrigeration and air conditioning (RAC) technicians and importers/retailers; RAC awareness raising.
Waste	Target of 15 MW from biomass and waste-to-energy, including a planned facility by 2035 and a smaller facility for cruise ship waste; new landfill commissioned by 2028; 20% reduction in waste generation by 2035.
AFOLU	Foster production of agro-energy crops; integrate innovative technologies, sustainable practices, and renewable energy (fully by 2030); train farmers; improve labour conditions to protect workers from extreme climate conditions; increase productivity and climate-risk resilience; promote soil health practices, water management, crop diversification, post-harvest practices, and infrastructure resilience; expand water reuse and improve wastewater treatment and irrigation systems; expand carbon sequestration through tree planting and conversion of sugarcane plantations.
Tourism	No specific action listed but touched transversally and by other policies.
Coastal Zones and Marine Environments	Following Barbados' Blue Bond with The Nature Conservancy, grant funding will be allocated to conservation, environmental, and sustainable development practices; improvements to wastewater treatment systems.
Loss & Damage / Disaster Risk Management	Disaster-linked clauses included in debt restructuring; the Resilience and Regeneration Fund will provide financial aid to people and businesses after a catastrophe.

Finance & Investment	Following the world's first debt-for-climate-resilience conversion in 2024 and a Green Climate Fund grant, 3% of GDP is expected to be invested in climate resilience; the Blue Green Bank is projected to finance over USD 250 million for affordable homes, hurricane-resilient roofs, electrification of public and private transport, and other NDC-aligned activities; the Resilience and Regeneration Fund will provide financing for resilience-building measures; actions and guarantees are planned to reduce private sector financing risks.
Human Settlements and Infrastructure	The Roofs 2 Reefs Programme is identified as the main tool to operationalise the physical development aspects of the NDC and other national policies; resilient housing designed to withstand up to Category 4 hurricanes; Project Hope, launched in 2024, aims to build 10,000 climate-resilient and energy-efficient houses within five years, financed through 20 years of rooftop solar savings and prioritising first-time low- and middle-income buyers; 3,000 low-income homes equipped with solar PV by 2030.
Health	Develop Health National Adaptation Plan.
Vulnerable groups	Implement social protection measures to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations (elderly, coastal area residents, displaced individuals, migrants, and those whose livelihood depends on agriculture, fishing, and tourism sectors); Mainstream gender considerations in climate actions/plans; position women and young persons at the forefront of climate change.

Sources: Based on authors' interpretation of NDC 2025. Presented actions are not exhaustive.

► Policies and frameworks in support of a Just Transition

A just transition requires robust policies that transform economic models while ensuring inclusivity, decent work, and economic sustainability.

Barbados has identified priority actions for transformation in its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to meet mitigation and adaptation goals. It is advancing laws and policies which, although not always explicitly referencing the Just Transition, incorporate essential actions that link climate targets with inclusive, decent, and sustainable changes in production and business practices.

This section outlines the main legal and policy frameworks that can support the Just Transition. The policies, regulations, and public initiatives cited are not exhaustive but are included due to their close relevance to the Just Transition and the NDCs.

Laws and norms

To achieve a Just Transition to a low-carbon economy and meet NDC goals, robust environmental protection laws are essential. Barbados does not yet have a comprehensive environmental protection act, but the **Environmental Protection Department (EPD)**, established in 1971, is responsible for environmental monitoring and for controlling conditions likely to affect land, air, water, and the overall health and well-being of Barbadians.⁴⁴ Key regulations that empower the EPD include:⁴⁵

- **Health Services Act:** promotes and preserves public health, regulating aspects of air pollution, water quality, pesticides, building development control, and derelict or hazardous materials.
- **Marine Pollution Control Act:** prevents, reduces, and controls pollution in the marine environment, with the EPD overseeing land-based sources of pollution.

Similarly, the **Coastal Zone Management Unit (CZMU)**, established in 1996, is mandated to preserve marine ecosystems. Its authority derives from the Marine Pollution Control Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Marine Areas (Preservation and Enhancement) (Marine Reserve) Regulations, and the Fisheries Act. Together, these laws and the CZMU protect marine ecosystems through permit procedures, monitoring, protected area designations, and enforcement of prohibitions and sanctions.⁴⁶ A **Fisheries Division** also exists, empowered by the 2025 Sustainable Fisheries Management and Development Act. This Act regulates fisheries management and development, protects the marine environment, and controls pollution arising from fisheries activities.¹⁰⁷

Barbados also has other Acts relevant to advancing NDC goals and supporting a Just Transition:

- **Catastrophe Fund Act:** designed to provide financial aid to citizens and businesses affected by natural disasters or other catastrophes. It is partially funded by workers' and employers' contributions. The Act has been revamped as the **Resilience and Regeneration Fund**, with an expanded mandate and financing sources, including budget allocations, access to dormant assets, and an increase in payroll contributions from 0.1% to 0.25%.⁴⁷
- **Blue Green Bank Act:** establishes a new institution to finance climate-resilient projects in the island's green and blue sectors. Supported by the Green Climate Fund, the Government of Barbados, and other partners, the Bank will provide loans, grants, and investments for initiatives such as renewable energy, resilient housing, and sustainable transport. The Act also sets out the Bank's governance framework and aims to mobilise private capital while fostering innovation in sustainable finance.⁷⁸
- **Physical Development Act:** replaces the former Town and Country Planning Act, strengthening environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes and aligning development and planning with the

Coastal Zone Management Act. It provides the legal basis for the Physical Development Plans (see policies subsection).

- **Wildlife protection legislation:** including the Wild Birds Protection Act and the Animal Cruelty Act, safeguards land and marine animals and preserves biodiversity.
- **Marine Transport (Emissions Control) Act:** establishes rules to curb air pollution from shipping through energy efficiency standards, emissions reduction measures, and fuel compliance requirements. It also sets procedures for appointing surveyors and monitoring compliance.
- **Returnable Containers Act (amended 2019):** expanded from covering only beverage containers to include glass, aluminium, steel, plastic, cans, jars, cartons, and other containers with recyclable or reusable materials. The amendment aims to reduce waste and stimulate the recycling sector.⁹²
- **Electric Light and Power Act:** allows independent power producers to generate electricity alongside the state-owned Barbados Light and Power Company through a licensing framework and system interconnection, promoting renewable energy use.
- **Electricity Supply Bill (2024, not proclaimed as of October 2025):** seeks to address technical and regulatory constraints to achieving 100% renewable generation, focusing on licensing, governance, and market structure.⁵¹

Barbados also contains several legal provisions that **fiscally incentivise** NDC goals and a Just Transition.

- In **renewable energy and energy efficiency**, the Income Tax Act, Value Added Tax Act, Excise Tax Order, Customs Act and Customs Tariff were amended to provide: full duty exemptions for renewable energy systems (for lighting between 5 % and 20 %, energy conservation discretionary) and zero VAT on materials and supplies for renewable energy generation, sale, and energy-efficient systems; differentiated excise tax rates for vehicles by engine capacity and fuel source, with lower rates for natural gas, hybrid, and electric vehicles; income tax deductions of up to BBD\$ 5,000 for “environmentally preferred products”, 150 % for internationally recognised environmental certification and authorised energy audits, and 50 % of retrofitting costs to shift premises and systems to non-fossil fuel sources; income tax holidays of 10 years for developers, manufacturers, or installers of renewable energy and energy-efficient products; enhanced deductions of up to 150 % for interest on loans to construct or upgrade renewable energy facilities, for staff training and individual training costs related to energy efficiency and renewables (for 10 years), and for marketing, product development, and research in these sectors; and exemptions on dividends for shareholders of companies solely engaged in renewables or energy efficiency, as well as on interest income earned by financial intermediaries financing these areas for a 10-year period.⁴⁸
- For other sectors, the **Tourism Development Act** allows expenditures on construction or the provision of certain amenities to be offset, and provides customs duty and VAT exemptions and refunds, as well as income tax deductions on interest, equity financing, training, and marketing; it also includes incentives for construction in non-coastal areas. The **Special Development Areas Act** grants benefits for construction or improvements to buildings in specified locations, while the **Housing Incentives Act** supports low-income housing development, though neither contains explicit green provisions. Additional fiscal measures include **research and development** tax credits (50 % of eligible expenditures against tax liabilities); a **productivity and innovation** tax credit (25 % for innovations successfully introduced to the market that increase sales, efficiency, or productivity); and **jobs** tax credits that rise with the number of employees.⁴⁸

Policies, plans and frameworks

Barbados has advanced a range of policies, plans, and frameworks to address climate risks and support its transition, many of which are grounded in social dialogue.

The **Declaration of Mission Barbados (2023)** has emerged as the country's central vision for the future. Developed through the Social Partnership,^{xii} it functions as a tripartite social compact and sets out six mission objectives. Two are particularly relevant: Mission I—to become by 2030 a clean and beautiful large-ocean state, championing sustainable development locally and globally, with the goal of all domestic activities becoming 100% sustainable by 2035; and Mission V—to empower and enfranchise all Barbadian workers and families by 2030 through opportunities for ownership and wealth creation, enabling Barbadians to care better for themselves and each other, and reducing poverty by 50%. The remaining missions focus on empowering citizens, securing water and food security, strengthening public health and safety, and building a digitally inclusive and resilient society.⁵⁰



To transform Barbados into a sustainable, prosperous, inclusive and resilient society. Barbadians must shift mindsets and engage as citizens and stakeholders in collaborating, innovating, and investing to shape Barbados' future.

► Vision – Mission Barbados

The **Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) Plans**, developed through the Social Partnership, have been central to economic transformation and the engagement of social actors. BERT 2018 was the first plan, developed in response to a decade-long crisis, and focused on restoring macroeconomic stability and fiscal sustainability in the context of high debt levels.⁵² BERT 2022 aimed to secure a resilient recovery from the pandemic.⁵³ It set out eight pillars, most of which are directly relevant to Just Transition and NDC goals. These include incentivising the green transition and building resilient infrastructure, investing in skills and education, and making government an enabler of productivity and competitiveness. The plan also prioritised diversification into high-skilled, carbon-neutral, and marine-conscious industries, alongside open labour market policies to address population decline. A BERT 2025 is under preparation and includes pillars on productivity and competitiveness, sustainable growth and reduction of public debt, financial market development and investment, climate resilience and green transition, and human capital and inclusion.⁵²

The **National Physical Development Plans (PDP)** have been ongoing since the first plan was published in 1970, with the PDP 2023 as the latest edition.⁵⁵ This comprehensive framework links Barbados' strategic vision for sustainable growth with land use, providing policies to align infrastructure, heritage, and mobility with national priorities while guiding public and private investment. Central goals include addressing the climate crisis, protecting scarce resources such as food, land, and water, advancing the transition to a green and blue economy, promoting sustainable development patterns, and building healthy communities. The plan also incorporates community plans for nine locations.

The **Roofs to Reefs Programme (R2RP)**, launched in 2021, is a key instrument for channelling climate investment and operationalising both the PDP and NDC actions.⁵⁶ It targets climate-resilient housing and infrastructure through measures such as hurricane-proof roof retrofits, water storage and sanitation upgrades, solar and green energy integration, and improved waste and water management. By prioritising vulnerable groups such as low- and middle-income households, women, and youth, R2RP aims to strengthen resilience, protect marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and address structural inequities. The programme also serves as a financing and coordination framework, linking policy with on-the-ground

^{xii} Barbados institutionalized tripartite mechanism for national social dialogue, created in the early 1990s.

► Just Transition and NDCs in Barbados

adaptation projects such as the HOPE initiative, which seeks to deliver 10,000 energy-efficient homes powered by rooftop solar PV.³

The **Barbados 2035: A Plan for Investment in Prosperity & Resilience**, launched in 2024, sets out government commitments for the next decade aimed at fostering social, economic, and climate resilience. It identifies 12 non-exhaustive investment priorities with an estimated financing need of BBD\$ 11.6 billion, of which BBD\$ 6.6 billion is expected from the private sector.⁵⁴ The plan is aligned with other key policy instruments, including Mission Barbados, the BERT plans, the SDGs, and the NDCs.³

The **Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Policy**, developed in 2022 and approved in 2024, guides Barbados towards a safer, more resilient society by embedding risk reduction and preparedness into national development.⁵⁷ It promotes multi-hazard management, early warning systems, and shared responsibility, while also strengthening financial protection and stress-testing mechanisms to manage disaster-related shocks. The policy also calls on businesses to play an active role by implementing disaster-risk management and business continuity planning. Previous policies had addressed disaster management and emergency response, but none as comprehensively as the CDM Policy.

► Box 1: Data-driven planning

Barbados is leveraging data to inform the interventions developed in its planning.

- **DigiFish** program digitizes fisheries data collection to monitor catches, species, and fishing activity in real time. By replacing paper logs with mobile and online tools, the initiative helps track the impacts of climate change on marine stocks, improve resource management, and strengthen livelihoods in the fisheries sector
- **The Hypervisor platform** integrates geographic, environmental, and infrastructure data to visualize climate risks such as flooding and storm surges. This tool enables policymakers to identify hotspots, prioritize investments, and plan infrastructure projects with stronger climate resilience. It supports programs such as Roofs to Reefs.

Source: IFC. 2023. [Barbados' Blueprint for Climate Resilience](#).

The **Amendment to the National Policy Framework for the Development of Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs)** was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2025, replacing the 2017 policy. The updated framework reflects challenges that have emerged since COVID-19 and places new emphasis on climate change adaptation and resilience. It prioritises business continuity and disaster preparedness by promoting risk management, data protection, and recovery planning to help MSMEs withstand shocks. The policy also encourages formalisation, sustainable growth, entrepreneurial skills development, worker reskilling and upskilling, financial access, tax credits, and incentives for adopting renewable energy, energy-efficient technologies, and eco-friendly practices. Digital transformation and innovation are highlighted as essential for enabling MSMEs to seize opportunities, reduce costs, and improve competitiveness. Sector-specific initiatives are included in renewable energy, agribusiness, tourism, and creative industries, with targeted measures for women, youth, and elderly entrepreneurs.^{89,90}

In addition to these overarching policies and strategies, Barbados has advanced a range of **sectoral frameworks** that address specific needs, contribute to NDC goals, and provide opportunities for social dialogue around the Just Transition.

- **Barbados National Energy Policy (BNEP) 2019–2030**: sets out a comprehensive framework to meet NDC commitments by transitioning the island to 100% renewable energy and eliminating fossil fuel consumption in the domestic economy by 2030 (now 2035).⁵⁸ It promotes solar, wind, biofuels, and storage technologies, and extends to the transport sector with targets for full electrification or biofuel use of new passenger vehicles. The policy emphasises energy security, affordability, and resilience while reducing foreign exchange spent on oil imports, and is supported by an implementation plan.

Complementing this, the **Integrated Resource and Resiliency Plan (IRRP)** was prepared in 2021 and updated in 2023, mapping decisions and horizons needed to reach 100% renewable electricity goals.⁶³ The IRRP is referenced in both the 2021 and 2025 NDCs as the basis for targets and assumptions. In 2025, the **Barbados Energy Transition and Investment Plan (ETIP)** was launched as an analytical roadmap comparing different energy transition scenarios, outlining technological and investment needs, and assessing cost-benefit trade-offs to provide an evidence-based pathway.⁵⁹

- **Blue Economy Strategic Roadmap** was adopted in 2021, setting out strategic actions and policy plans across sectors, including tourism, maritime transport, fisheries, marine biotechnology, and energy.⁷² Ongoing work includes a **Marine Spatial Plan** and an **Ocean Policy**.³ Barbados has also made explicit the importance of the blue and green economies, by adding these functions to the now Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy.
- **Updated Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan 2020–2030**: provides a more robust and informed approach to coastal planning in Barbados as a key component of the transition. It strengthens the integration of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation practices compared to previous plans.⁶⁰
- Other relevant policies and plans include: the **Barbados Population Policy**, which addresses negative population growth; an **Agriculture and Climate Change Policy** to build a resilient sector by emphasising food security, sustainable practices, renewable energy use, and worker protection; the **Water Reuse Act**, which regulates water reuse practices and safety; the **National Cooling Strategy**, part of NDC strategies, to transition refrigeration and air-conditioning systems towards climate- and ozone-friendly alternatives; a **Health National Adaptation Plan** under development to build a climate-resilient health system; a **Water Protection and Land Use Zoning Policy**, currently before Parliament, to replace the 1963 framework; and a forthcoming **National Policy on Gender and Gender Action Plan** that aim to integrate gender considerations into climate change policy.⁶¹

International commitments and programmes

Barbados has also participated in a range of international commitments and programmes and sought partnerships that directly support the Just Transition and NDC implementation. Some of the most relevant and recent include:

- **Engagement as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS)**: Barbados is highly active in SIDS initiatives. In 2024, the urgency of action to support SIDS was reaffirmed through the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity (ABAS), which addresses areas such as resilient economies, climate action, financial support and debt management, human capital and social development, technology access, partnerships, and international cooperation.⁷⁵
- **The Bridgetown Initiative**: spearheaded by Barbados, this global call seeks to reform development finance by changing how funds are loaned and repaid, particularly in the context of climate resilience and recovery.⁶⁹
- **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**: the IDB has been a consistent partner in supporting Barbados' transition. A new Country Strategy 2025–2030 was recently launched to provide more structured support. It is built around three pillars: promoting inclusive and sustainable growth; enhancing social resilience; and building climate resilience while advancing energy transformation. Priority areas include improving regulatory environments and financial inclusion for MSMEs, reducing skills mismatches, boosting productivity, expanding digitalisation, strengthening social protection, and enhancing infrastructure resilience. The strategy also supports the energy transition and integrates gender equality and inclusion as cross-cutting priorities.⁷⁴ In addition, the IDB has provided Barbados with low-cost, long-term financing instruments for climate action and supported the operationalisation of the Green Blue Bank.³

► Just Transition and NDCs in Barbados

- **World Bank Group:** in 2023, the Investing in Green and Resilient Recovery in Barbados project was launched, supported by a USD 100 million loan with repayments scheduled from 2028 to 2041. The project is structured around two pillars: (1) green and blue resilient development, which has delivered measures such as the Water Reuse Act and the creation of an Environmental Sustainability Fund for grant financing; and (2) facilitation of low-carbon and resilient infrastructure, including new standards, revisions to disaster management and emergency response plans, and expansion of renewable energy capacity.⁷⁶ The World Bank Group is also assisting Barbados in structuring public-private partnerships for wind energy projects and in lowering the cost of private financing.³
- **International Monetary Fund (IMF):** the IMF has played an active role in Barbados' 2018 recovery actions, when measures were taken to address nearly a decade of economic crisis and unsustainable debt levels. The Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) Plans were developed in response to IMF debt restructuring agreements.³ These home-grown agreements have shaped Barbados' fiscal space, focusing on reducing debt and restoring fiscal sustainability. At the same time, Barbados and the IMF have introduced innovative measures, such as incorporating climate clauses into debt agreements. In 2022, Barbados became one of the first countries to access the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust, which provides long-term financing to help vulnerable low- and middle-income countries address climate change and other structural challenges.^{3,71}
- **The Nature Conservancy (TNC):** TNC has been a key partner in supporting Barbados' debt-for-nature swaps, which create fiscal space for investment in conservation and resilience. In 2022, with support from TNC and the IDB, Barbados executed a USD 150 million debt conversion for marine conservation, coupled with a commitment to protect 30% of its Exclusive Economic Zone.^{3,57} In 2024, Barbados carried out the world's first debt-for-climate swap with support from the IDB, European Union, and Green Climate Fund. This transaction is expected to free up resources equivalent to 3% of GDP for climate resilience investments.³
- **International Labour Organisation (ILO):** the ILO has been a key partner in advancing a Just Transition in Barbados. In 2016, Barbados joined the UN Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), led nationally by the ILO. Through PAGE, social partners have engaged in tripartite discussions and projects. Milestones include the establishment of the Blue Economy Finance for SIDS Recovery and Sustainable Development initiative; the launch of a Green-Blue Economy Learning programme; high-level meetings and workshops among social partners; and a national symposium on Just Transition and job creation, which led to the announcement of a Renewable Energy Skills Council.⁶⁷ Barbados has launched its Decent Work Country Programme 2025–2030 in July 2025, which will unite social partners in actions to promote decent jobs through inclusive and sustainable development.^{27,66}

Barbados' Just Transition and NDC implementation are also supported by broader frameworks and partnerships such as the **Paris Agreement** and the **Sustainable Development Goals**, as well as through engagement with donors and stakeholders including UNEP, the European Union, and UNDP.

► Role and actions of Governments, Employers', and Workers' Organisations related to the Just Transition

The ILO Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all identifies tripartite engagement as a principal mechanism. It states that employers' and workers' organisations should: a) effectively **engage in social dialogue** in all its forms to ensure the sharing of benefits and advance just transition and decent work at enterprise, sectoral, and national levels; b) **develop the capacity of their members** to analyse and respond to the impacts of environmental and climate change; c) design and **implement their own initiatives** in support for a just transition, including sector-specific initiatives, and contribute to balanced policymaking; d) contribute as key partners to training and reskilling activities; and e) develop and implement sustainable transition plans at the enterprise and sectoral levels through bipartite social dialogue.⁷³

This section outlines how the Government of Barbados, Employer and Business Membership Organisations (EBMOs), and Workers' Organisations are contributing to these efforts. It presents a range of examples—though not exhaustive—of their activities that can be related to a Just Transition.

Government

The Government of Barbados, across **key ministries** such as the Ministry of Energy and Business, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector, the Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy and the Prime Minister's Office, plays a central role in the Just Transition—as architect of laws and policies, convener of social dialogue, and provider of essential services and financial access that shape how businesses, workers, and communities adapt to climate and economic transformation.

Main implementer and architect. The section on policies and frameworks outlines several laws, policies, and programmes advanced in Barbados that connect to the Just Transition. The government is the primary authority responsible for developing, enforcing, implementing (or facilitating) these actions. Their success, however, depends on the involvement and awareness of representatives from businesses and workers, as their membership is directly affected by many of these actions. Some instruments are binding for businesses and workers—for example, requirements to conduct environmental impact assessments or contribute to the Resilience and Regeneration Fund. In addition, the government is the authority responsible for international commitments such as the Paris Agreement, ratified ILO Conventions, and debt instruments designed to support climate action and resilience.

Convener. The government has greater capacity than other actors to bring together domestic and international stakeholders. In Barbados, several spaces and examples illustrate this role. However, committees and councils do not always function effectively, either because they have not been created or because they are not regularly convened (see section on Social Dialogue processes).⁷⁷ Convening stakeholders is a core function for advancing a Just Transition: without it, governments risk moving forward unilaterally and ineffectively on climate and social actions.

Direct services. The government also plays a direct role in providing businesses, workers, and residents with services that support their well-being and development. Some of the most relevant in Barbados with links to the Just Transition include:

- **Education and skill building:** Barbados has several institutions offering educational pathways and training programmes, including careers and skills linked to the transition to a low-carbon, climate-

resilient economy (see Box 2 below). The Give Back Policy covers tuition fees for Barbadian students at selected institutions^{xiii} in exchange for a set number of approved volunteer hours with government agencies, NGOs, schools, religious organisations, or the private sector.⁸² Until 2014, the government fully funded tuition at the University of the West Indies – Cave Hill, with the Give Back Policy introduced in 2018. In 2025, with UNICEF support, the Green Rising Programme was launched to equip 5,000 young people with training, mentorship, and support to lead climate action, build resilient communities, and develop sustainable green and blue businesses and livelihoods.⁹⁸

- **Employment services:** the Barbados Employment and Career Counselling Services is intended to assist jobseekers and could be leveraged to support transition efforts. In 2025, the Barbados Job Registry was launched to connect jobseekers with employers, with the aim of serving not only traditional job sectors but also encouraging participation from creative industries, young people, and career changers.⁸⁰
- **Access to finance (green, blue, and disaster relief):** Barbados has developed a range of instruments to finance Just Transition and NDC actions, supported by debt-for-nature conversions and alliances with international partners. The Blue Green Bank, legislated in 2024 with the Green Climate Fund backing, is expected to mobilise over US\$ 250 million for renewable energy, resilient housing, and sustainable transport.⁷⁸ The Resilience and Regeneration Fund, revamped in 2025 from the Catastrophe Fund, finances recovery and resilience-building for households and enterprises after climate shocks, pooling resources from budget allocations, dormant assets, and payroll contributions to support workers and firms.⁴⁷ The Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund (BESF), launched in 2024 and backed by a debt-for-nature swap, provides grants for conservation and biodiversity projects, channelling funding to marine spatial planning and community initiatives that enable citizens and businesses to safeguard natural resources while promoting sustainable development.⁷⁹ In addition, through partnerships, the Barbados Cleantech Cluster has been established to offer entrepreneurs and start-ups direct support, training, export promotion, and access to project and venture capital.⁹¹

Several government ministries are actively involved in activities that support the Just Transition.

- The **Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy (MENB)** is responsible for promoting and facilitating the sustainable use of Barbados' natural resources. It also serves as the lead entity for coordinating the **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**. The **Environmental Protection Department (EPD)** operates under the MENB.
 - The **Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy (MMABE)** was responsible for the protection and development of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and plays a key role in coastal and ocean resource management policies (e.g. Updated Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan 2020–2030) and debt-for-nature swaps (e.g. blue bonds). It is developing a **Marine Spatial Plan** and an **Ocean Policy**. It includes key divisions such as the **Coastal Zone Management Unit (CZMU)** and the **Fisheries Division** (see Policies and Frameworks section). *The functions of this ministry in relation to maritime were ascribed to the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport, and the blue economy to the MENB
- The **Ministry of Energy and Business (MEB)** oversees energy policy, planning, licensing, and monitoring, and leads Barbados' **transition to 100% renewable energy** (see Policies and Frameworks section). It also commissioned the Amendment to the **National Policy Framework for the Development of Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs)**.

^{xiii} Listed institution are: University of the West Indies, Barbados Community College, and Erdiston Teachers' Training College

► Just Transition and NDCs in Barbados

- The **Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment (MoFEI)** manages the **Blue Green Bank** and has been instrumental in advancing financial mechanisms that support climate transition investment needs.

► Box 2: Education and training for the Just Transition

The following list highlights how different education centres are training the Barbadian workforce with skills aligned to a low-carbon economy:

- **Barbados Community College (BCC):** offers a Certificate in Photovoltaic Design & Practice, combining online modules (via Solar Energy International) with hands-on training to prepare technicians and designers in solar systems. It also provides environmental science majors, along with STEM and health programmes that include environmental tracks, all at the associate degree level.
- **Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology (SJPI):** through its Distance and Continuing Centre provides short-courses in Photovoltaic Installations, Energy Advisory, Refrigeration and A/C, and Wind Energy. A Sustainable Energy Youth Empowerment Programme has also been launched and aims to offer scholarships in energy-related trades.
- **Barbados Vocational Training Board (BVTB):** operates TVET and apprenticeship pathways in technical trades relevant to energy-transition infrastructure. It offers Solar Water Heater Technician and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning apprenticeships, alongside skills training in electrical installation, plumbing, RAC, and automotive. Evening and part-time courses are available.
- **The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill (UWI):** provides undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Environmental Studies, Natural Resource Management, Sustainable Air Transport, and Sustainable Energy Management, supported by research labs working on climate and energy. Following ABAS 2024, it was agreed to establish a SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub at Cave Hill to support SIDS in curriculum development, capacity building, knowledge exchange, and NDC implementation (currently NDC stocktakes).³
- **National Transformation Initiative (NTI) and Coursera:** launched in 2020, the NTI provides online short courses tailored to national skills needs. Since 2021, it has partnered with Coursera to give citizens free access to learning tracks in renewable energy, climate change, environmental management, and green and blue economy foundations, among other areas.

Source: Correspondence with Barbados Ministry of Labour. For programme information see reference 81.

The **Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector (MoL)**, as a tripartite partner, plays an active role in advancing Barbados' transformative goals. Relevant actions towards the Just Transition include:⁸³

- **Green jobs and skills:** through its People Development Implementation & Monitoring Unit (PDIMU), the MoL is aligning apprenticeships and short courses in renewable energy, energy efficiency, electric vehicle maintenance, and climate-smart construction (e.g., retrofitting, roof strapping, and water efficiency). A more systematic effort has begun to modernise the National Apprenticeship System to equip workers for green and blue economy jobs.
- **Skills gap analysis:** the MoL is mapping occupations and competencies against labour market demand. Its Manpower Research and Statistical Unit, responsible for data collection and analysis, is planning a skills gap assessment.
- **Tripartite engagement and dialogue:** the MoL participates in tripartite bodies and consultations relevant to the Just Transition, including the Social Partnership, C144 Committee, the DWCP, the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, UN PAGE, and Mission Barbados Committees (further details are provided in the section on social dialogue processes).
- **Policy implementation:** The MoL has taken specific responsibilities under several key policies and plans outlined earlier. Under the Declaration of Mission Barbados, it acts as a social partner and

contributes to mission workstreams on green jobs and skills. For the National Physical Development Plan and the associated Roofs to Reefs Programme, it analyses labour market implications for construction, housing retrofits, and coastal projects, while supporting skills pipelines for these activities. Through the financing streams of the Blue Green Bank, the MoL will provide guidance on green jobs pipelines to be supported. Under the Barbados Energy Transition and Investment Plan (ETIP), it has taken the task of developing related skill standards, apprenticeships, and Just Transition measures for workers in the energy and transport sectors.

Other **ministries and departments**, such as **the Planning and Development Department, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Transport and Works, the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport, the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, the Barbados Parliament, local city councils, and the Cabinet of Ministers itself** are all integral to achieving a successful Just Transition.

Social Partners

Employer and Business Membership Organisations (EBMOs) and Workers' Organisations play an essential role in policy consultation and as partners in policy implementation. Existing tripartite social dialogue mechanisms are examined in the following section. This subsection highlights examples of initiatives led by social partners themselves, as well as bipartite dialogue.

EBMOS

Barbados EBMOS have engaged their members to raise awareness and support social dialogue on the Just Transition. While direct services remain limited, the following actions and programmes are highlighted:

Barbados Employers' Confederation (BEC)⁸⁶

- **Advocacy:** BEC has undertaken advocacy at both domestic and international levels to ensure employers' perspectives are considered in policy processes. Domestically, this includes contributing to the development of Mission Barbados, monitoring the BERT plans, highlighting gaps in energy legislation affecting the transition, and questioning the feasibility of sugar-derived biofuels given seasonal cycles. It has also demanded greater transparency on the calculation and use of employer contributions to the Resilience and Regeneration Fund. BEC emphasises that its work is not about lobbying for government commitment—which it recognises is already strong—but about ensuring effective implementation and assessing impacts on employers. It also advocates inclusion of themes such as women's participation, youth opportunities, tackling informality, and an MSME lens. In addition, BEC connects private-sector expertise with the government to help develop collaborative solutions. For instance, in 2024, when rising temperatures severely affected domestic dairy production, BEC worked with the government to identify both short-term solutions, such as cooling infrastructure, and longer-term measures, such as importing genes from cattle more resistant to tropical conditions.⁸⁵ Internationally, in 2024, BEC participated in the 4th SIDS Conference, which produced the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). As part of a coalition of EBMOS, BEC contributed to the "seven key points for the implementation of ABAS," focusing on competitiveness and resilience of domestic private sectors, skills and labour migration, economic diversification, reduction of informality, enhanced trade and financial systems, and regional coherence. BEC also belongs to the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) Alliance for Green Skills, launched at COP27 in 2022 to promote adaptive skills frameworks and prepare members to advance the green transition.
- **Services:** BEC offers a range of services that, although not yet explicitly framed around the Just Transition, could be leveraged to support it. These include training in OSH compliance, vocational qualifications for employees, and customised training developed in collaboration with employers.

BEC also provides advisory and representation services in industrial relations, including drafting and revising collective agreements, and facilitates key business processes such as work permit applications and recruitment. As Barbados advances its climate transformation, BEC is well-positioned to adapt its services by assisting employers in climate discussions around OSH and collective bargaining and expanding training and vocational certifications to align with the skills needed for the green transition.

Other EBMOs in Barbados are also advancing initiatives in support of the Just Transition and NDC goals:⁸⁷

- **Barbados Hotel & Tourism Association (BHTA):** has established the Barbados Environmental and Sustainable Tourism (BEST) Programme to promote environmentally friendly practices in the tourism sector. Previously, it collaborated with the Caribbean Hotel Energy Efficiency Action Programme (CHENACT) alongside the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, and the IDB. The project conducted energy audits and introduced efficiency measures in small and medium-sized hotels, achieving savings of up to 50% in water use and 30–50% in energy costs.⁶⁴ A donation-based programme also exists in many hotels, asking guests to contribute BBD \$1 per night to a resiliency fund to support recovery from natural and health disasters.
- **Barbados Coalition of Service Industries (BCSI):** has developed toolkits for business continuity planning, undertaken research on renewable energy potential from sugarcane and on ocean sustainability, and delivered webinars on renewable energy and green financing. It also operates a dedicated unit that supports SMEs in exploring service-export opportunities.
- **Barbados International Businesses Association (BIBA):** has actively promoted corporate adoption of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) values, emphasising their relevance across all sectors. It also raises awareness among members on building climate resilience.
- **Small Business Association of Barbados (SBA):** has played a leading role in advocating for MSMEs, including contributing to the development of the first National Policy Framework for the Development of MSMEs in 2017. It was also a key partner in the design of the 2025 amendment to this MSME policy, which places stronger emphasis on green transition and climate resilience.^{89 90}
- **Barbados Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI):** through its Green Committee, supports the national goal of achieving 100% renewable energy. It has engaged in awareness-raising on the green economy and inclusive business practices (e.g., its 2024 Scaling Impact in Barbados, Green & Renewable Energy Expo), offered free membership to cleantech start-ups, and built capacity through initiatives such as the Wildey Businesses Pilot Project to Build Environmental Sustainability. It also provides policy input and representation in areas such as marine spatial planning, wind subgroup discussions, energy development planning, the Returnable Containers Act, reviews of the national energy company merger, and participation in the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund (BESF).
- **Barbados Manufacturer Association (BMA):** promotes the concept of a “global village” by encouraging local manufacturing to meet international standards and markets. Its trade and innovation expos regularly showcase smart and sustainable technologies aimed at transforming local manufacturing processes. It also launched the Rations Pack Initiative (RPI), which provides ready-made meals for hurricane and emergency situations. These rations are designed and sourced by local manufacturers, with local preferences and ease of use in mind.
- **Barbados Renewable Energy Association (BREA):** was established to foster and develop the renewable energy and energy efficiency business environment. It plays an active role in advocacy, dissemination, and public education on renewable energy and efficiency opportunities and challenges.
- **Barbados Private Sector Association (BPSA):** serves as an umbrella body for the private sector and represents employers in key social dialogue forums, including the Social Partnership. Through

this role, it has a direct voice in high-level policy discussions and contributes to shaping strategies to achieve Barbados' climate ambitions.

Workers' Organisation

Workers' organisations in Barbados are highly aware of the impact of climate change on the world of work and the transformations it will bring.

Barbados Workers' Union (BWU) represents more than 20,000 members—over 15% of the labour force in 2024. The union plays an active role in aligning workers' needs with national goals by:⁹⁵

- **Agenda setting, national and international:** in 2021, on the occasion of its 80th anniversary and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, BWU presented a reset agenda to strengthen and build its organisational capacity. Climate change and resilience have since been central themes. BWU has supported these priorities in national forums and policies such as Mission Barbados and is involved in drafting the new organising protocol for the Social Partnership, which centres on the six missions of Mission Barbados. This includes the creation of mission boards to design, support, and monitor implementation. As Mission Barbados directly shapes the country's vision for a sustainable, renewable-powered nation and is a key framework referenced in NDC 2025, BWU's participation is highly significant. At the regional and international levels, BWU's General Secretary (GS) has played an active role, being elected in 2025 as President of the Commonwealth Trade Union Group, representing more than 70 million members across 53 countries.⁹³ The GS has also contributed to the ILO's Regional Perspectives Series on the New Social Contract and Workers' Organisations, voicing the importance of decent work, fundamental principles and rights at work, Just Transition, and a common social partner agenda for sustainable development, both domestically and internationally.⁹⁴



We need to set priorities around a Just Transition and not only as a result of the climate issues that Barbados face, and is not only on account of digitalization, but is ensuring that however transformation takes place, whatever transition takes place that we are in a position to take workers from where we are now to where we have to go in the future

► General Secretary Toni Moore – BWU⁹⁴

- **Representation and advocacy:** BWU's role spans both the policy and company levels. At the policy level, it has engaged in social dialogue on key frameworks such as Mission Barbados, the BERT plans, and energy policies, while also bringing a green and decent work perspective into the implementation of the Roofs to Reefs Programme.^{xiv} Its advocacy focuses on human capital development, including better labour market information to anticipate future skills needs, and a just approach to migration policies that balances skill shortages with opportunities for local workers. BWU also follows a tradition of political unionism, with its General Secretary currently serving in the House of Assembly, and from 1994 to 2020, BWU had representation in both the House and Senate. This provides a direct channel for influencing policy to reflect workers' interests.

^{xiv} The Roof for Reefs as the main programme to build climate-resilient housing and infrastructure will create jobs to implement these goals. BWU is having discussions with its members in construction sector on how these jobs can have a green and decent component.⁹⁵

At the company level, BWU played a central role in the 2025 creation of the Barbados National Energy Company Limited (BNECL), formed from the merger of the Barbados National Oil Company Limited and the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited, with plans to include the National Petroleum Corporation. BWU has sit on the Board of the new company (BNECL) and was instrumental in ensuring that no jobs were lost during the restructuring, framing it as a collaborative transition process. The BNECL will be critical for advancing Barbados' clean energy projects, and BWU is engaged through its Board role in shaping how the 2035 goal of 100% renewable energy and zero fossil-fuel dependency will be met, including the upskilling and reskilling of workers.^{95 96} BWU is also a member of the board of the National Housing Corporation, which is expected to undergo reform as well.⁹⁸ In bipartite dialogue and collective agreements, BWU notes that climate-related provisions are not yet common, though OSH-related precedents exist—for example, agreements on water stations for construction workers. The recent recognition of occupational safety and health as part of the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is seen by BWU as an opening to bring climate dimensions more firmly into collective bargaining.

- **Awareness raising:** BWU runs the Frank Walcott Labour College, a tertiary-level institution that offers courses and workshops for students and members on industrial relations, negotiation, OSH, and management, as well as programmes in economics, sociology, and politics.⁹⁶ Its flagship programme is the Certificate in Industrial Relations (CIR), and it has also partnered with the National Transformation Initiative (NTI) (see Box 2). The College has also been used to raise awareness of sustainability among BWU members and students—for example, by teaching the use of home spaces and containers for growing food, to promote sustainable practices and food security. Looking ahead, BWU intends to expand its training to include solar panel installation and maintenance, and is exploring ways to integrate the Just Transition more explicitly into its educational offer. BWU notes that the programme is nearly ready for roll-out, though resource and financial constraints have delayed its implementation.
- **Internal commitment and sustainability:** BWU views the implementation of sustainable practices within its own facilities and activities as a way to ensure coherence while generating cost savings. At both the Labour College and its headquarters, it has undertaken tree-planting campaigns, adopted rainwater use for cleaning, and by 2024 had digitalised many of its operations. BWU has also signed a memorandum of agreement with the government, the private sector, and the predecessor of BNECL to develop a solar farm on 32 acres of union-owned land. The solar farm is expected to power the Labour College and surrounding affordable housing units, while also feeding electricity into the national grid, passing savings to its members and contributing to Barbados' renewable goals.

Other unions are also supporting activities towards Barbados' low-carbon transition: The **National Union of Public Workers (NUPW)** was actively engaged in protecting workers' rights and jobs during the BNECL merger process and will remain engaged in upcoming reforms to other SOEs, such as the National Housing Corporation.⁹⁸ Given the large share of public sector employment in Barbados and the ongoing restructuring of state-owned enterprises, the NUPW remains a key voice for workers. It also participates in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council, contributing to skills development planning. The umbrella organisation, the **Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB)**, along with Barbados Secondary Teachers Union (BSTU), NUPW and BWU, plays an active role representing workers in the Social Partnership and ensuring that workers' perspectives are included in policy development and implementation, including climate-related actions.

► Social dialogue processes and multi-stakeholder engagement on the Just Transition

A common identity highlighted by social partners is that Barbados is a nation of social dialogue. This sentiment is closely linked to the role of the Social Partnership, which for more than 30 years has engaged in high-level discussions and decision-making. This section presents some of the existing, past, and planned social dialogue processes and multi-stakeholder engagements in Barbados that are relevant to the Just Transition.

- The **Social Partnership (SP)**: Barbados' apex social dialogue body was created in the early 1990s in response to economic crisis and industrial unrest. It brings together government, employers, and workers' representatives in a tripartite framework to negotiate Protocols that shape national policy on economic, labour, and social issues. Its main functions are to maintain industrial harmony, support macroeconomic stability, and align national development strategies. The Social Partnership is chaired by the Prime Minister, representing the highest level of political commitment to social dialogue in Barbados, and meets at least quarterly. The Subcommittee of the Social Partners operates as the first line of consultation, stipulated to meet monthly to address implementation issues, resolve disputes, monitor labour matters, and provide recommendations to the Social Partnership. It is chaired by the Minister of Labour; and Government representatives include the Head of the Civil Service, the Director of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Civil Service, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, the Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, the Chief Personnel Officer and the Chief Labour Officer. The social partners have an equal number of representatives from the Barbados Private Sector Agency (BPSA), Barbados Employers' Confederation (BEC), Barbados Workers' Union (BWU), National Union of Public Workers (NUPW), Barbados Secondary Teachers Union (BSTU), and the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB). The Sixth Protocol is the most recent compact signed in 2011, and sets out tripartite views, agreements, and commitments on globalisation, employment, taxation, industrial relations, environmental issues, technological and labour market changes, productivity, and other areas. It also explicitly recognises the right to decent work as a core objective.¹⁰⁰ A new protocol for 2025–2030 is under development and is expected to incorporate the commitments agreed in the Declaration of Mission Barbados.⁹⁵
- **The Declaration of Mission Barbados**: serves as a guiding instrument for the country's long-term vision. As part of its implementation, "mission boards/committees" are expected to be established to oversee delivery and ensure social dialogue around each of the six missions (see Box 3).⁹⁵ Given that the Declaration was tripartite in nature, it is anticipated that these boards will retain tripartite engagement. The Declaration also calls for the development of a dashboard with baseline measurements and a mix of economic and non-economic indicators.⁵⁰ If implemented, this would serve as an important tool for evidence-based social dialogue. Furthermore, the Declaration requires each social partner to define its specific contributions to achieving the missions.
- **Barbados Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2025–2030**: signed in 2025, the programme will be accompanied by the establishment of a DWCP Steering Committee.⁶⁶ This committee will act as the national body responsible for the governance, implementation, and monitoring of agreed DWCP priorities. The Committee will be tripartite in composition and may also include representation from other key national stakeholders where appropriate. The Barbados DWCP Steering Committee will pursue gender parity and ensure adequate representation of other stakeholders. It is expected to meet monthly and to undertake activities such as monitoring and evaluation, awareness-raising, resource mobilisation, and establishing links and partnerships with other national bodies and development partners.²⁷

► Just Transition and NDCs in Barbados

- **C144 Committee:** established in line with Barbados' obligations under ILO Convention No. 144 (Tripartite Consultation – International Labour Standards Convention). C144 requires ratifying states to set up procedures ensuring regular consultation between government, employers, and workers on matters related to ILO labour standards. The C144 Committee, through its discussions on ILO standards and recommendations, provides an important space to integrate Just Transition considerations. Furthermore, since 2022, the recognition of a safe and healthy working environment as part of the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work strengthens the relevance of this space for linking labour standards to climate and transition discussions.

► Box 3: Missions of the Declaration of Mission Barbados and social partners agreed actions⁵⁰

The Declaration of Mission Barbados has six missions that have been agreed upon by social partners:

- I. By 2030, become a clean and beautiful large-ocean state, championing sustainable development locally and globally – with the goal of all domestic activities becoming 100% sustainable by 2035.
- II. By 2030, transform Barbados into a country of active, involved citizens. All Barbadians will feel empowered and engaged in the social, economic, and cultural development of the country as confident, creative, compassionate and entrepreneurial citizens.
- III. By 2030, ensure that every Barbadian has equitable and reliable access to clean water and nutritious food that are affordable.
- IV. By 2030, create a society that prioritizes wellness and happiness. Improve public health and safety, leading to a 50% reduction in new cases of non-communicable diseases and a 50% reduction in crime.
- V. By 2030, empower and enfranchise all Barbadian workers and families by creating opportunities for ownership and wealth creation that enable Barbadians to take better care of themselves and each other and reduce the rate of poverty by 50%.
- VI. By 2030, transform Barbados to be a high-functioning, resilient society with seamless access to services and meaningful digital inclusion for all Barbadians.

Social partners have agreed that the Declaration serves as a social compact with distributed leadership and shared responsibility and is to be implemented collaboratively. Other actions agreed on are:

- Develop more concise and planned actions to implement the missions.
- Seek buy-in and promote the mission among their members and other key stakeholders.
- Conduct actions under the context of voluntarism as applied to industrial relations in Barbados.
- Reaffirm commitment to industrial harmony and observe the principles of tripartism.
- Put data systems in place to monitor progress, value-creation and challenges of each mission.
- Determine what each partner will deliver on the missions in terms of planning and implementation and sensitise the wider public.
- Develop and sign a Seventh Protocol for the Social Partnership.

- **National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health:** serves as another tripartite platform where Just Transition and climate-related issues can be addressed. Climate risks such as flooding, rising temperatures, drought, and stronger tropical storms present significant challenges for the world of work and OSH, particularly in highly vulnerable nations like Barbados. Social partners note that climate discussions within OSH are not yet systematic, but conversations have begun, especially regarding the impacts of rising temperatures.^{95,101} The Committee comprises 19 members, nine of whom are social partners, alongside government representatives from labour, agriculture, health, and the Environmental Protection Department.¹⁰²
- **National Committee on Wellness in the Workplace:** mandated to implement and monitor the National Workplace Wellness Policy, this committee also has a tripartite composition,

supplemented by stakeholders from vulnerable groups, the health sector, academia, and religious organisations. The Wellness Policy adopts a broad definition of workplace wellness, encompassing physical, mental, environmental, social, occupational, intellectual, and financial dimensions.¹⁰³ This space could be leveraged to integrate Just Transition, decent work, and climate objectives. For example, the financial, intellectual, and occupational dimensions emphasise work–life balance, financial stability, professional development, and skills acquisition. Environmental wellness extends beyond health and safety to encourage waste reduction and connection with nature—for instance, through natural lighting and indoor plants in workspaces.

- **Technical Vocational Education and Training Council (TVETC):** includes representatives of public sector workers and of general workers, employer representatives from tourism, manufacturing, and the broader private sector, as well as members from the main academic institutions and the Ministries of Labour and Education. It is a statutory body mandated to enhance Barbados' competitiveness by developing its workforce, making it a key institution for advancing the Just Transition and meeting skills needs for the country's NDC goals.
- **Minimum Wage Board:** is a tripartite body with equal representation, composed of nine appointed members. Its composition and responsibilities are set out in the Minimum Wage Act, and include advising on minimum wages and related terms and conditions. Minimum wages in Barbados have been adjusted three times in the last decade and a half—2012, 2021, and 2025. The Board has become a forum where minimum wage and living wage perspectives are being discussed.¹⁰⁵ These discussions are relevant as wage floors intersect with decent work objectives, the incidence of informality, and are applicable to many workers in sectors highly exposed to climate impacts (e.g., tourism, agriculture, construction). They also carry implications for productivity, enterprise viability, and long-term economic transformation.
- **Productivity Council:** established in 1993 out of the Social Partnership Protocols, was a tripartite body tasked to promote productivity and competitiveness across the public and private sectors. Its mandate included developing methods for measuring and improving productivity, running educational programmes, and engaging in consultations on performance and efficiency. The Council played a significant role for over 25 years in fostering workplace improvements and supporting the objectives of the Social Partnership. It was closed in 2019 as part of BERT expenditures reductions, with the expectation to be replaced by a competitiveness council.¹⁰⁸
- **Renewable Energy Council:** is to be a tripartite-plus body convened to support a Just Transition in Barbados' renewable energy sector. Its purpose is to align skills standards, curricula, apprenticeships, and certifications, ensuring workers and enterprises are prepared for the energy transition. The Council's Terms of Reference have been drafted, with nominations advancing,^{xv} and waiting for the Cabinet's formal establishment.^{3,83}

An important space for multi-stakeholder engagement is the **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)**. Since NDC 2021, Barbados has placed greater emphasis on consultations, with NDC 2025 reporting two missions in 2024 and 2025 and around 10 related meetings.³ The NDC is a central mechanism for advancing a Just Transition and sets the country's climate goals. As outlined in the Lessons from NDC Iterations section, NDC 2025 includes commitments and actions highly relevant to social partners. However, reported direct engagement of **social partners in the development process was limited, with no evidence of active participation**.^{95,101} At the same time, the NDC builds on policies and plans—such as Mission Barbados and energy strategies—where social partners have been directly involved, meaning their perspectives are reflected in the document. Strengthening mechanisms for explicit and structured tripartite participation in future NDC cycles would ensure fuller alignment and ownership.

^{xv} The MoL informed the nominations include industry associations (e.g., Barbados Renewable Energy Association), utilities suppliers, TVET providers, unions, and relevant ministries.⁸³

► Current Just Transition Challenges and Opportunities in Barbados

Barbados' transformative goals offer opportunities to advance both economic and social development. Nevertheless, the structural changes required will not affect all businesses, workers, and communities equally, making a Just Transition essential: one that builds environmentally sustainable economies that are inclusive, create decent work, reduce inequality, and leave no one behind. This demand managing challenges and maximizing opportunities around climate action while building the enabling conditions for change. It also requires anchoring decisions in social dialogue to ensure fairness and broad buy-in.

This section outlines key **challenges** and **opportunities** that shape Barbados' Just Transition toward a green, low-emission economy.

Challenges

Import-reliance and limited fiscal space. Barbados, as a small Caribbean island, is highly dependent on energy and food imports. Although its debt levels have been decreasing, they still remain above 100% of GDP. Yet, the country has set an ambitious goal of achieving 100 % renewable energy. The NDC 2025 estimates a financing need of US\$ 3.5 billion for adaptation and mitigation actions by 2040, while the Barbados 2035 Plan—which outlines investment priorities aligned with Mission Barbados, the SDGs, the NDC, and other national policies—projects a total need of around US\$ 5.8 billion, 57 % of which is expected from the private sector.^{3 54} Consulted tripartite partners highlight funding and fiscal constraints as major challenges.⁷⁷ The achievement of Barbados's aspirations depends on continued improvements in fiscal management and the ability to secure international and private financing.

Regulatory and technical constraints remain in the energy sector. Barbados has faced ongoing integration issues related to governance, licensing, and market structure in advancing its renewable energy goals.^{33 51 86} The sector remains highly concentrated; the state-owned Barbados Light and Power Company serves approximately 136,000 customers.^{33 51} An Electricity Supply Bill intended to address many of these issues was passed in 2024, but had not yet been proclaimed as of November 2025. Achieving the country's renewable energy targets and realising related job creation opportunities will depend on overcoming these regulatory and technical barriers.

Policy design is coherent, but implementation lacks cohesion. While Barbados has produced several policies in recent years that speak to one another in reaching its climate goals, government representatives have expressed the need to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination. Furthermore, slow implementation is a reality that can make the country's ambitious goals less feasible.^{113 118} An example of this reality is that the NDC renewable goals were reassessed to 2035, and the reported issues with energy supply integrations.

Diversification is recommended, but must be feasible. As a small island state highly vulnerable to climate disasters, Barbados's service-oriented economy is likely to remain dominant. Barbadians recognize that tourism is and will continue to be a key sector, with many activities closely linked to it. Yet the market remains concentrated on visitors from the UK, U.S., and Canada, and on traditional recreational offerings.⁵¹ Barbados's Just Transition will depend on the sector's engagement and the adoption of sustainable practices within tourism and its supply chain. Diversification opportunities exist in the renewable energy, blue, and bioeconomy sectors, which are already showing signs of growth.⁵¹

High dependency ratio and shrinking labour force. It is estimated that for every 100 working-age persons, there are more than 50 dependents in Barbados.⁶⁶ The labour force has also declined compared to levels two decades ago, a trend that, if it continues, will further raise the dependency ratio.^{26 27} While the country performs relatively well in gender equality indicators, evidence points to unequal care burdens,

underrepresentation of women in management in the private sector, and male dominance in growth sectors such as energy and construction.^{5 26 28 66} A Just Transition can only be achieved if these structural issues are addressed.

Migration is seen as a potential solution, but it must be balanced with local opportunities and adequate protection. Effective October 2025, Barbados implemented full freedom of movement for CARICOM nationals of Belize, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.¹⁵ Increased migration is viewed as a potential response to the country's declining population.^{66 109} Currently, most migrants are employed in lower-skilled and lower-paid occupations—often in sectors with higher climate vulnerability such as agriculture and construction—and have limited access to social protection.^{27 39} Workers' organisations advocate for a balanced migration approach that does not undermine locals' access, addresses skill gaps, and expands opportunities.⁹⁵ At the same time, the continued emigration of skilled workers underscores the economy's limited capacity to generate attractive jobs for many Barbadians.²⁷

Social partners were also asked about the **main challenges** their members face when transitioning toward a sustainable economy:^{xvi}

Survey insights – Just Transition Challenges¹¹³

Tripartite partners in Barbados responded to a short survey for this report on the challenges they and their members face in advancing a Just Transition:

- **EBMOs.** Infrastructure readiness and the clarity and stability of regulations and policies were identified as very severe obstacles by respondents, while access to green finance was viewed as severe. Other obstacles—such as shortages of technical expertise and skills mismatches, limited government support and incentives, and insufficient access to relevant information—were rated as moderate, with market demand for sustainable products considered minor. A consulted EBMO noted that businesses face legal barriers to procuring green infrastructure and the necessary skills. Furthermore, while initiatives are underway, the green skills training offer is not yet available at the required scale.¹⁰¹
- **Unions.** The dominant concern relates to workforce development: a scarcity of reskilling programmes, weak systems for anticipating green skills needs, and limited technical expertise were seen as severe barriers for workers in the Just Transition. Union representatives also regarded cultural resistance to change as a severe obstacle and access to relevant information as moderate. Policy-related obstacles—such as regulatory clarity, stability, and access to policymakers—were viewed as minor. Consulted union representatives emphasised a knowledge and planning gap in identifying current and future skill needs. This lack of planning extends to employers, with some companies implementing changes abruptly rather than strategically, which undermines the principles of a Just Transition. Finally, they echoed that members' resistance to change remains a central challenge, further exacerbated by insufficient understanding of skill gaps needed to support workers effectively.³³
- **Government (MoL).** Obstacles identified by the Ministry of Labour include the need for a stable regulatory framework to promote sustainable enterprises; embedding Just Transition provisions across national strategies and labour ministry agendas; building institutional and technical capacity at subnational levels; providing continuous opportunities for consultation and social dialogue with social partners; conducting policy impact evaluations; strengthening inter-ministerial coordination; and improving access to and availability of labour market data.

Note: A predefined list of challenges was presented. Presented challenges differed according to each tripartite partner's context.

Existing spaces for dialogue are not always institutionalized or convened effectively. Barbados has several established fora for dialogue and a strong tradition of tripartism. However, reliance on informal procedures and norms can at times weaken their effectiveness, particularly in ensuring timely consultations. Some relevant tripartite bodies, such as the Productivity Council, have ceased to function.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, the

^{xvi} The transition to sustainable economy wording is used as respondents tend to be more familiar with this concept, while it still aligns with Just Transition principles.

status and composition of the National Climate Change Committee—identified in the 2015 NDC as responsible for climate policy implementation—remain unclear, with no reference to this body in more recent NDCs.⁶⁵ Without effective and institutionalized spaces for dialogue, the social engagement necessary for a Just Transition becomes more difficult to achieve.

The skills gap is a main challenge highlighted by social partners. While secondary education attainment among the adult population is high (~90 %), associate-level (~12 %) and tertiary-level attainment (~20 %) remain low compared with international standards (OECD 2023 tertiary average: 41 %).^{5,110} Efforts to revamp vocational training to align with renewable energy goals and blue/green jobs are underway.^{83 101} However, gender-based segregation of these programmes and persistent stereotypes may restrict women's access.²⁷ Youth also face lower participation rates, with 2016 estimates indicating that 23 % were not in education, employment, or training (NEET).²⁹ Social partners stress that without a clearer understanding of current and future skills needs, the Just Transition will encounter serious implementation challenges.^{33 101} Surveys of Barbadian MSMEs over the past decade and a half consistently identify an “inadequately educated workforce” as a major obstacle.⁸⁹ Government officials have also expressed the underdeveloped capacity for building skills as a main challenge to support the transition.¹¹⁸ Existing public services for jobseekers are estimated to reach less than 2% of them.⁷⁴ Although a Barbados Job Registry was launched in 2025, it does not yet include an explicit focus on promoting green jobs.⁸⁰

Informality is not compatible with decent work. No recent informality estimates are available, but earlier figures place informal activity at around 30–40% of GDP and labour informality in 2016 at 62%. Informality is more prevalent among smaller firms.^{30 34} A Just Transition must prioritise the creation of decent jobs, which cannot be achieved if large segments of the workforce remain informal.

Domestic financial access and awareness. Access to finance—including for climate-related initiatives—remains a commonly reported constraint for businesses.^{89 101} Several initiatives have been launched recently (e.g., the Blue Green Bank and the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund), but their effectiveness is still unknown, and greater awareness of available opportunities is needed.

A familiarity gap exists with the NDCs, and limited direct engagement. EBMOs reported being aware of the NDCs but not familiar with their details, while unions and Ministry of Labour representatives described their familiarity as “somewhat to moderately familiar.” The NDC processes in general are typically led by and consulted with various public actors. Barbados's NDC 2025 references the tripartite social compact, Declaration of Mission Barbados, as a key framework. However, there was no evidence of active consultation with social partners during its preparation. This limited familiarity and engagement pose a significant challenge to advancing NDC goals and aligning them effectively with the Just Transition.

Opportunities

Robust growth and expected controlled inflation. After a decade of sluggish growth following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic, Barbados is now experiencing robust GDP growth, and inflation is expected to remain within acceptable parameters, depending on external shocks (e.g., U.S. tariffs). Stable macroeconomic conditions are a conducive environment for the growth of sustainable enterprises.¹¹¹

Improved fiscal management and innovative debt-for-nature conversion. Barbados's debt levels have fallen from a 2017 peak of 180% of GDP to around 100% in 2025.^{6,7} The Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) plans, collaboration with IMF programmes, state-owned enterprise reforms, and the adoption of a procedural fiscal rule in 2021 have strengthened fiscal management.⁷ As debt levels and interest payments become more manageable, climate investments become increasingly feasible. Barbados has also emerged as a leader in innovative financing mechanisms that exchange costly existing debt for instruments with improved terms—such as lower interest rates, longer maturities, local-currency

denomination, or grant components.^{3 112} These arrangements have required that fiscal savings be reinvested in climate action projects. In Barbados's case, this has included **commitments to protect 30 % of its Exclusive Economic Zone** and to enhance water resource management, food security, and renewable energy initiatives.^{3 112} Barbados has also introduced disaster clauses in loans with entities such as the IMF, providing temporary relief during crises.⁶⁴

A vision for the future built on social dialogue and accompanied by policy alignment. Barbados's vision for the future is articulated in the tripartite Declaration of Mission Barbados, which explicitly aligns with a sustainable and Just Transition. Broader economy-wide and sectoral policies also show strong alignment. For instance, the NDC 2025 references Mission Barbados and the Physical Development Plan (PDP), while the Roofs to Reefs Programme (R2RP) serves as the operationalisation of the PDP and several NDC investments. Similarly, Barbados 2035: A Plan for Investment in Prosperity & Resilience defines investment priorities to fulfil actions set out in these frameworks. Barbados has also strengthened its regulatory environment by updating the Town and Country Planning Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, and Catastrophe Fund Act, and by advancing the awaited Electricity Supply Bill. A review of national laws and policies shows that Barbados is coherently planning towards a sustainable future. Moreover, there is a strong national identity rooted in social dialogue, reinforced by over 30 years of experience through the Social Partnership.

Tripartite partners are knowledgeable about Just Transition and more engaged. A survey of tripartite partners for this report found that all were “somewhat to very familiar” with the Just Transition concept, which is part of the agenda of the Social Partnership. However, direct integration into their member-focused activities remains limited, with engagement occurring mainly through institutional mechanisms such as the Social Partnership, Mission Barbados boards, and the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). EBMOs demonstrate modest efforts, with the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and the Barbados Renewable Energy Association (BREA) showing active involvement in Just Transition-related initiatives. Ministry of Labour representatives indicated that activities are ongoing, with additional actions planned, while union representatives participate in key processes—such as state-owned energy company mergers and job security advocacy efforts—but face constraints in offering direct services to members due to limited resources, information, and capacity. There is also reported collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and other key ministries, including Environment and Energy.^{83 113}

Climate-focused support to vulnerable groups and NDC concrete actions. Barbados recognises the need for specific instruments to support vulnerable groups most affected by climate and economic shocks. A Health National Adaptation Plan is being developed to create a more climate-resilient and responsive health system. A National Policy on Gender and accompanying Gender Action Plan are also underway, aiming to integrate gender considerations into climate and broader policymaking. The National Policy Framework for the Development of Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) was amended in 2025 to strengthen MSMEs' adaptation and resilience to climate and economic shocks, while promoting formalisation, skills development, financial access, and the adoption of sustainable, low-carbon practices. The Roofs to Reefs Programme (R2RP) prioritises low- and middle-income households, women, and youth.

NDC 2025 retained key elements from NDC 2021—such as loss and damage, responses to vulnerabilities and risks, and gender considerations—while adding important components including Just Transition, health, social protection, population, and mobility. NDC 2025 also outlines concrete measures that advance a Just Transition for businesses and workers by promoting green enterprise development, low-carbon production, and workforce adaptation. These include energy-efficiency standards, capacity-building for technicians, training for farmers in climate-resilient practices, strengthened labour protection in climate-affected sectors, and resilient housing and infrastructure programmes that create new employment and skills opportunities aligned with sustainable development goals.³

Green jobs creation and sustainable growth opportunities. Barbados's ambitious vision of becoming a 100% renewable and sustainable island is creating and will continue to create opportunities for green jobs and the growth of sustainable enterprises.

- **Energy sector.** The transition is underway, with the National Energy Policy's 2030 target for distributed solar (e.g., solar panels) already achieved.³ In 2024, renewable sources generated 14.4 % of electricity—up from 9 % in 2021—and the clean energy sector is expected to create around 1,500 new jobs by 2035.³
⁷⁵⁹ Meeting renewable energy goals will also free fiscal space for climate and Just Transition priorities, as oil imports represented on average 8.2 % of GDP between 2010 and 2019.³ The aspirational goal of 100% renewable powered nation has been reset for 2035 (70 % RE electricity generation by 2030 and 95 % by 2035). Achieving this will require effective policy implementation and involvement from social partners.
- **Transport sector.** Progress continues, with Barbados operating the largest per capita electric bus fleet in the Caribbean—estimated at 89 buses in 2025, out of a total of 126 vehicles in 2024.³⁵¹ Imports of renewable energy vehicles are also increasing, reaching 27 % of total imports (mostly hybrids) in Q1 2022, prior to the introduction of tax incentives.¹¹⁴ Growth in this sector supports job creation, training for electric vehicle maintenance, reduced emissions, and decreased dependence on fuel imports.
- **Blue economy.** Barbados identifies itself as an ocean state, linking its sustainable growth to the blue economy.^{50, 2} The 2021 Blue Economy Roadmap highlights opportunities for revenue generation and employment in existing industries such as shipping, coastal infrastructure, and fisheries, and for diversification into boatbuilding, net-making, mariculture, marine biotechnology, and offshore wind.⁷² It also stresses the importance of diversifying around marine—not only coastal—resources. Blue carbon is viewed as a key emission-capture strategy, though accounting remains underdeveloped and constrained by current NDC guidelines.^{3,70} Barbados has a dedicated ministerial function for the blue economy and is developing a Marine Spatial Plan and an Ocean Policy.³
- **Recycling and waste management.** These areas hold further potential for job creation and progress toward climate targets (e.g., the NDC 2025 goal of 20% waste reduction) but require ongoing monitoring and support given the prevalence of informal practices and vulnerable conditions in the sector globally. Barbados already records a strong landfill diversion rate of 69 %—notable for the region.³ In 2024, the government and UNDP launched the Sustainable Management and Resilient Thinking for our Energy Revolution (SMARTER) project, funded by the Global Environment Facility, to convert agricultural waste into bioenergy. Additionally, the Water Reuse Act approved in 2023 offers new opportunities for job creation and climate action.³
- **Construction and other sectors.** Consulted tripartite partners noted that the ongoing construction boom presents a key opportunity to promote green and decent jobs—through green design, sustainable material sourcing, and the adoption of standards (e.g., CREEBC).⁷⁷ Unions are engaging on how the R2RP's construction focus could further support decent and green job creation.³³ Partners also identified tourism, energy, and transport as strategic sectors, while the Barbados Workers' Union (BWU) highlighted food security and supermarkets as additional areas for attention.^{33 77}

Advancements in financial access and strong fiscal incentives. Financial access constraints and high upfront costs for climate investments remain major barriers for businesses. Barbados is making progress through the expected operationalisation of the Blue Green Bank, which will provide loans, grants, and investments for initiatives such as renewable energy, resilient housing, and sustainable transport (with an estimated portfolio of around USD 250 million).³ In addition, a wide range of fiscal incentives exists across the renewable energy, tourism, construction, and innovation sectors, including tax breaks, duty exemptions, and deductions designed to promote green investment, efficiency, and job creation aligned with NDC and Just Transition goals.

Potential to be a regional knowledge hub and driver of skills development. Barbados is strengthening its research and training capacities to support both national and regional transitions to low-carbon economies. Following the 2024 Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity (ABAS), it was agreed to establish a SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus. This hub will assist small island developing states (SIDS) with curriculum development, capacity building, knowledge exchange, and NDC implementation (currently through NDC stocktakes). The hub's feasibility has been supported through Barbados's participation in the UN Partnership for Action on Green Economy (UN PAGE).⁶⁷

Barbadian education institutions are also expanding training opportunities to meet the skills needs of the transition, offering technical, vocational, and university programmes in renewable energy, environmental management, and sustainability. Partnerships with the National Transformation Initiative (NTI) and Coursera are further broadening access to green and blue economy skills nationwide. A Renewable Energy Council to align training curricula and establish standards for the sector is expected to be operationalised soon.^{3 83} The Ministry of Labour affirms that it is modernising the National Apprenticeship System to equip workers for green and blue economy jobs, and there is evidence that it is engaging social partners in this process.⁷⁷

Strong international collaboration and leadership. Barbados has demonstrated strong global leadership and strategic collaboration in advancing climate action. As an active SIDS, it has championed collective resilience and spearheaded the Bridgetown Initiative, which calls for a fairer and more responsive international development finance system. Through its partnership with the ILO, Barbados has launched its Decent Work Country Programme (2025–2030), building on lessons from its participation in the UN PAGE initiative to promote decent and green jobs. The country's engagement with institutions such as the IDB, World Bank, IMF, and The Nature Conservancy has mobilised innovative financing for resilience and blue economy investments. Barbados also joined the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in 2022, which has since established a regional office to strengthen coordinated responses to climate and migration challenges.¹⁰⁹ This leadership and network of partnerships are expanding opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and technical assistance to advance Barbados's Just Transition.

► Recommendations to support the Just Transition and NDC Implementation

A just transition can turn climate ambition into decent work, social justice, and prosperity—ensuring no worker, enterprise, or community is left behind. To advance on this pathway, this section presents recommendations for social partners to advance Just Transition and NDC implementation. These recommendations are developed based on the Barbadian context explored in previous sections and on the policy areas highlighted in the ILO's 2023 Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.¹¹⁵

► Social dialogue and tripartite engagement

1. Reactivate, revamp, and engage existing spaces for dialogue. Barbados already has several bodies through which social dialogue occurs or could be strengthened around climate goals and Just Transition activities—including the Social Partnership, Mission Boards, the DWCP Steering Committee, the TVET Council, and the forthcoming Renewable Energy Council. Specific recommendations include:

- a. Make the Just Transition more explicit. While these bodies address issues related to Just Transition, discussions are often indirect rather than focused on the theme itself. Establishing dedicated working groups, thematic tables, or periodic meetings specifically on the Just Transition would help mainstream the agenda. Other tripartite mechanisms—such as the OSH and C144 committees and the Minimum Wage Board—could be better leveraged to integrate Just Transition topics, particularly regarding occupational safety and health, climate-related risks, and decent work. At the policy level, the Just Transition could be embedded as a transversal lens across strategies, similar to the approach expected for gender mainstreaming in Barbados. [Social partners indicated that although the Just Transition is included in the agenda of tripartite bodies, there is limited discussion and data on current and future skills needs or on which occupations will be most affected—positively or negatively. At the same time, unions are already engaging in relevant policy dialogues, such as aligning the Roofs to Reefs Programme with green and decent job creation and ensuring that state-owned energy enterprise mergers incorporate job security considerations.](#)
- b. Strengthen national ownership and independent convening. Activities on the Just Transition should increasingly be convened independently by tripartite partners, rather than relying heavily on international organisations such as the ILO. Greater national ownership of the agenda is essential. [Tripartite partners have participated in Just Transition training courses and a 2024 Just Transition symposium, which were considered valuable for raising awareness and fostering collaboration. Discussions on skills needs are also emerging. However, the Just Transition agenda remains more peripheral than mainstreamed across institutions and policies. The Ministry of Labour has also identified as a challenge the need to provide more continuous opportunities for engagement with social partners.](#)
- c. Engage and become aware of other consultation spaces. Several national policies and plans call for the creation of advisory and consultative bodies with private-sector and NGO participation. [For instance, BERT 2022 proposes a Public-Private Sector Growth Council; the Comprehensive Disaster Management \(CDM\) Policy establishes an Emergency Management Advisory Council and encourages active private-sector involvement; and a Population Commission with a mandated Migration Subcommittee is already in place. The Physical Development Plan was developed through consultations with over 500 participants, while additional spaces for dialogue exist in coastal management, fisheries councils, the Roofs to Reefs Programme, and SOE boards, among others.](#) Social partners should remain informed about and engaged in these mechanisms wherever possible. While resource limitations and competing priorities are recognised, a mapping of existing bodies could help identify where participation would most effectively advance members' interests and a just transition. Encouraging members to serve as representatives could also expand influence and visibility. Ultimately, social partners cannot participate if they are unaware—or not informed—of these opportunities. [Notably, interviewed representatives reported that their institutions were not consulted during the preparation of NDC 2025.](#)

► Just Transition and NDCs in Barbados

- d. **Institutionalise and strengthen social dialogue spaces for priority areas.** Barbados has a strong tradition of social dialogue, but must review how to better institutionalise, revitalise, and sustain these mechanisms. Key bodies such as the Social Partnership have not been convened at certain periods, and as of 2025, it continues to operate under an outdated protocol, though a revised version aligned with Mission Barbados is reportedly being drafted. The Productivity Council, which operated for decades, was dissolved in 2019 due to fiscal cuts, with discussions of establishing a new competitiveness council, though no concrete progress has been observed. Similarly, the National Climate Change Committee (NCCC)—mentioned in NDC 2015—has no recent public information regarding its actions, composition, or current status. International experience shows that countries with climate change legislation tend to have more institutionalised climate committees, often including tripartite representation. In general, private-sector representatives are typically involved in climate committees, but environmental and vulnerable group organisations are often prioritised over other key actors, such as trade unions. Barbados should avoid this experience.
2. **Engage in multistakeholder dialogue but prioritise tripartite spaces.** Climate action discussions are, by nature, multistakeholder, as they must integrate diverse perspectives. However, social partners should also work to establish dedicated tripartite spaces that explicitly bring the employment and labour dimensions into climate debates. In Barbados, tripartite engagement on climate issues has been concentrated at the full Social Partnership level. However, more detailed work is now being carried forward through the Mission Boards. Mission Board 1, in particular, has been tasked with determining the strategic steps required to make Barbados a clean and beautiful large-ocean state by 2030. This and other Mission Boards report into the full Social Partnership, creating a structured link between technical workstreams and high-level tripartite dialogue on how to advance a Just Transition. A practical improvement will be to generate dialogue spaces and agendas that specifically address shared tripartite concerns (e.g., labour aspects) within broader climate discussions.
3. **Start bipartite engagements.** Collective bargaining is a core tool of social dialogue, and regional experience shows the incorporation of environmental dimensions. Relevant issues include OSH risks from extreme weather, adjustments to work schedules and spaces, training for green technologies, access to adequate protective equipment, and early-warning systems. Labour productivity should also feature in these conversations. Barbados is currently experiencing productivity levels higher than a decade ago, and adopting a green productivity approach could generate mutual gains for employers and workers—through lower energy and material use, reduced externalities, circularity benefits, and expanded green product markets linked to worker incentive schemes. These are discussions that can be advanced through both bipartite and tripartite dialogue. However, in Barbados, such conversations are not yet common practice, with survey results indicating that engagement tends to occur more with international organisations or government agencies than directly among social partners.
4. **Develop capacities for policy engagement and monitoring.** Social partners in Barbados need stronger capacities to influence and monitor policies to ensure their members' perspectives are reflected in the Just Transition and NDC implementation. Given resource constraints, lessons from peers worldwide can offer practical models—such as engaging member volunteers to review policy documents, conducting short opinion surveys, preparing concise data-driven policy briefs, creating social dialogue calendars and KPIs, and leveraging evidence from regional/peer networks (e.g., CARICOM, SIDS), international counterparts (e.g., IOE, ITUC), and institutions such as the ILO. Tracking participation in dialogue and lobbying efforts across these areas can also help demonstrate value added to members and strengthen accountability. Active engagement of social partners and improved coordination among ministries are vital. These goals can be facilitated by more effective convening, transparent mechanisms, clear responsibilities, and the provision of practical tools for monitoring and engagement. Mission Barbados calls for the development of dashboards with baseline data and a mix of economic and non-economic indicators; once implemented, this could serve as a key instrument for evidence-based social dialogue.

► Support policies and mechanisms

1. **Increase financial awareness and opportunities.** High transition costs and limited access to finance remain among the main barriers cited by businesses in Barbados. With the operationalisation of the

Blue Green Bank and other mechanisms such as the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund (BESF) and the Resilience and Regeneration Fund, businesses and workers will gain greater financial access to advance their transition towards sustainable practices. However, strong awareness-raising efforts will be required from all social partners to ensure this information reaches their members effectively. Access to information was reported as a moderate barrier to the Just Transition in Barbados and across the Caribbean.¹¹³ A lack of understanding about available green finance instruments is also a common constraint, even in countries with more developed green portfolios. Developing a Green Taxonomy—as implemented in the EU and Colombia—or a Sustainable Taxonomy as in Mexico could strengthen financial sector capacity and unlock green investment to meet NDC targets while supporting businesses and workers' transitions. Green public procurement can also act as a catalyst by integrating green purchasing criteria that prioritise opportunities for small businesses and include clauses on decent work and responsible sourcing. Barbados already provides a range of fiscal incentives directly supporting NDC and climate objectives. These incentives should be more systematically monitored—with social partner input—to assess their accessibility (e.g., number of applications, approvals, and processing time), effectiveness (impact and user profiles), and fiscal sustainability.

- 2. Private involvement is a defining strategy for Barbados' goals.** In recent years, Barbados has communicated its investment needs and financial gaps more robustly and transparently, and strongly recognized the need for private sector involvement. Barbados 2035: A Plan for Investment in Prosperity & Resilience estimates total investment requirements of US\$ 5.8 billion, with 57 % expected from the private sector. NDC 2025 identifies US\$ 3.5 billion in adaptation and mitigation costs, 65 % of which will come from national contributions. Barbados has also taken a leadership role among SIDS in advocating for development finance reform through the Bridgetown Initiative. To meet these ambitious financing targets, private-sector participation will be essential. This requires addressing structural barriers to investment and improving mechanisms to attract and retain private interest. According to the IDB's Country Strategy for Barbados, foreign investors face regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles, limited physical and digital infrastructure, a small capital market, skills gaps in the labour force, high energy costs, complex tax structures, a lack of a single-entry point for information and regulation, and weak institutional frameworks for public-private partnerships. For local investors, many of these barriers also apply, alongside risk aversion and limited credit availability for MSMEs, partly due to insufficient credit risk information (though a Fair Credit Reporting Act was passed in 2021).⁷⁴ Progress is being made, including the Electricity Supply Bill and emerging public-private partnerships in wind energy. Significant challenges persist: Social partners—particularly EBMOs—have a key role to play in helping the government address these bottlenecks, while also informing and mobilising private investment in climate action. NDC 2021 referenced a Climate Finance Working Group, yet no evidence was found of its recent activities or outcomes. Revitalising this group could strengthen coordination and monitoring of private investment in climate initiatives. Barbados could also draw lessons from Belize's NDC Private Sector Investment Strategy, which outlines concrete measures to engage the private sector more formally in NDC implementation.
- 3. Skill shortages and mismatches remain a priority.** Social partners broadly agree that skills gaps are a major constraint on economic growth, productivity, and transition efforts (diversification, the green and blue economies, and ICT). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is viewed as central to addressing these challenges. National conversations and policy initiatives are ongoing, especially around renewable energy skills, while education institutions are expanding offerings in key areas such as solar energy, the blue economy, and energy efficiency (e.g., RAC programmes). The ILO's expertise in training and skills systems (e.g., CARICOM's Regional TVET Strategy) could be further leveraged to strengthen national TVET programmes and plans. However, social partners emphasise a persistent lack of detailed information on specific skills needs and gaps. Barbados's leadership in per capita solar water heater use illustrates how targeted demand can generate both a skills pipeline and tailored TVET programmes, such as for Solar Water Heater Technicians. This experience could be reviewed to inform broader TVET development and rally support for needed initiatives. Improved and timelier data on migration, skills mismatches, and green jobs are needed to design evidence-based actions. The Barbados Labour Force Survey already includes valuable data on education and training (e.g., purpose and location), which could be more systematically published or shared with social partners. With CARICOM's freedom of movement now in effect for some countries and Barbados

acknowledging the need for migrant labour, a flexible migration policy could help ease skills shortages—provided it included fair opportunities for local workers and implementation monitoring. Barbados's public employment services currently have low coverage. The Job Registry launched in 2025 could become a key tool if expanded to include a clear focus on green and renewable energy jobs. Institutionalisation of employment services could also be strengthened, as Barbados has not ratified the ILO Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88)—which requires free, nationwide public employment services—or the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), which provides a framework for agency operations and protection of workers using such services.

- 4. Strengthen support for Barbados's women, youth, migrants, and small businesses.** Women, youth, and migrants continue to experience weaker labour outcomes and unequal access to education, finance, business support, social protection, and infrastructure. Occupational stereotypes in many sectors can also restrict women's access to high-growth areas such as renewable energy and construction. Small businesses also face higher barriers, including limited credit access, fewer business support services, constrained training opportunities, and administrative burdens. Addressing these inequalities should be a key policy priority under the ILO's Just Transition framework. Promising approaches include formalisation programmes for workers and enterprises, the creation of cooperative-led green jobs in agriculture and waste management, and care-economy policies that recognise the disproportionate care responsibilities carried by women and girls. Skills development programmes targeting these groups, along with MSME-focused initiatives that strengthen business capabilities, can further promote inclusive participation. Employment services should also be leveraged to deliver more targeted support to these populations. [Barbados has already taken important steps through its NDC 2025 and other national policies to better support vulnerable groups. Programmes such as the Youth Enterprise Scheme, prioritisation of women and youth under the Roofs to Reefs Programme \(R2RP\), and the amended MSME Policy Framework are positive examples. The forthcoming National Policy on Gender represents another opportunity to mainstream gender equality and inclusion into national development and Just Transition efforts.](#)
- 5. Advance key legislative gaps and policy pipelines to support the transition and NDC implementation.** Barbados currently lacks a national climate change law, a comprehensive environmental protection act, and a circular economy framework, while its OSH legislation requires updating (e.g., sector-specific regulations and protections for domestic workers). [Several important policies and legislative initiatives are in the pipeline, including the Electricity Supply Bill, the National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\), the National Gender Policy, the Water Protection and the Land Use Zoning Policy, the Ocean Policy, and the Seventh Protocol for the Social Partnership, among others.](#) Government action is needed to accelerate the adoption and implementation of these pending frameworks, while social partners should actively participate in consultations and advocate for their timely advancement. At the same time, the development of new legislation must strike a balance between compliance requirements and enabling incentives, ensuring that regulatory processes do not impose excessive administrative burdens—especially on MSMEs.
- 6. Multiple transitions, not always just.** Barbados is experiencing concurrent transitions in energy, production, and digitalisation, yet these are not always approached through a Just Transition lens. Firms—particularly MSMEs—tend to prioritise process upgrades and technology adoption, while national strategies largely focus on attracting investment to diversify the energy mix and expand ICT, with less detailed attention to skills development and social implications. This framing often relegates the Just Transition to a secondary consideration. However, the Just Transition is not a sequential process; it must be planned and carried out simultaneously.
- 7. A twin transition can be pursued.** Barbados's key policies, such as Mission Barbados, and consultations with social partners, emphasise that digital transformation is also a national priority. A twin transition approach—integrating green and digital transitions—can therefore be embedded within social dialogue processes. While the Just Transition has traditionally focused on climate action, there is growing recognition that its principles apply to digital transformation, which can also generate inequalities or exclusion if not planned and implemented inclusively. Digital innovation is increasingly recognised as an enabler of the green transition. Technologies associated with Industry 4.0 or general digital tools can accelerate progress by improving productivity, resource efficiency, and waste reduction. Emerging evidence shows that both transitions can reinforce each other, driving innovation and creating new opportunities for sustainable growth.¹¹⁷

- 8. Build an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises as a driver of a Just Transition and decent jobs.** The ILO's 2023 Just Transition Resolution underscores that sustainable enterprises are essential to the transition. Barbados social partners should be guided by the 17 enabling-environment conditions for sustainable enterprises: 1) Peace and political stability; 2) Good governance; 3) Social dialogue; 4) Respect for universal rights; 5) Entrepreneurial culture; 6) Sound and stable macroeconomic policy; 7) Trade and sustainable economic integration; 8) Enabling legal and regulatory framework; 9) Rule of law and secure property rights; 10) Fair competition; 11) Access to financial services; 12) Physical infrastructure; 13) ICT; 14) Education, training and lifelong learning; 15) Social justice and inclusion; 16) Adequate social protection; and 17) Responsible stewardship of the environment. Sustainable enterprises strengthen social dialogue and labour relations, develop people and skills, adapt working conditions to climate risks, focus on shared productivity gains, and embed CSR and good corporate governance. [Tripartite partners in Barbados could map these 17 conditions across national, local, and sectoral levels to identify where the business environment already supports sustainability and where targeted actions could further advance Just Transition objectives and the creation of decent, green jobs.](#)

► **NDC 2025 recommendations**

Barbados has fulfilled its obligation to submit a new NDC by 2025 (5-year period). As implementation of ongoing and new targets progresses, the following recommendations aim to help social partners engage more effectively, bringing their members' perspectives into the NDC process and strengthening its Just Transition lens. While some earlier recommendations relate indirectly to NDC implementation, the points below are more explicit:

- 1. Institutionalize engagement in implementation.** Engagement should not end at the development stage, particularly given the limited evidence of effective participation by social partners in Barbados' NDC processes. Stronger mechanisms are needed to consult, inform, and involve partners during implementation. Establishing thematic working groups that bridge climate change and world-of-work issues could help ensure tripartite input, collaboration and implementation. Social partners should also play a more active role in monitoring and holding institutions accountable for implementation progress. Additionally, the socialisation and sensitisation of NDC 2025 are necessary, given reported familiarity gaps among social partners. These practices would enhance dialogue, coordination, monitoring, and accountability—ultimately improving the overall effectiveness of the NDCs and ensuring that Just Transition principles are mainstreamed throughout implementation.
- 2. Adaptation measures for key sectors must be more explicitly included in the NDC.** Barbadians recognise the central importance of the [tourism sector](#). However, in both current and past NDCs, tourism has not been treated as a standalone sector. Other Caribbean countries—such as Belize—have adopted this approach, which provides greater clarity on planned adaptation and loss and damage actions. Barbados's NDC references several complementary plans and frameworks that address multiple sectors, including tourism-related, energy, and transportation. Yet tourism is not presented as a distinct sector, limiting clarity of planned adaptation or loss and damage actions for this vital sector. As Caribbean economies generally have lower emissions and fewer AFOLU capture opportunities, maintaining a strong focus on adaptation remains important. This focus should be complemented by a clearer, more detailed articulation of adaptation measures, particularly in climate-sensitive sectors like tourism.
- 3. Bring a business and workers' lens into the NDC.** NDC 2025 introduces several actions relevant to employers and workers. [Including energy-efficiency standards, capacity building for technicians, training for farmers in climate-resilient practices, strengthened labour protections in climate-affected sectors, and resilient housing and infrastructure programmes that generate new employment and skills opportunities.](#) The document also has a dedicated Just Transition section referencing the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), along with sections that give attention to gender, health, social protection, population, mobility, and vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, explicit targets and actions related to OSH in the context of environmental risks, job loss and creation, social protection enhancement, and transition planning are missing. Likewise, the NDC does not clearly differentiate actions for small businesses or outline how they will be supported; for example, in applying green building codes, energy standards, or audits. Integrating these elements would help ensure that the NDC's implementation fully reflects the realities and capacities of both workers and enterprises, particularly MSMEs.

- 4. Blue carbon accounting holds promise but technical support will be needed.** As an ocean state, Barbados has been a strong advocate for advancing NDC accounting methodologies (IPCC guidelines) to include and operationalise a broader concept of blue carbon—carbon captured by ocean ecosystems such as seaweeds and corals on the ocean floor. Current IPCC guidelines already permit the inclusion of coastal ecosystems within the AFOLU sector, specifically tidal marshes, mangroves, and seagrasses. However, Barbados has not released an updated greenhouse gas emissions inventory since 2018, with the next update expected in 2026 as part of the Third National Communication.³ An updated inventory is essential to assess progress and identify technical support needs. Strengthening blue carbon accounting would also open new opportunities for climate finance and highlight the importance of conservation efforts within Barbados’s Exclusive Economic Zone.
- 5. Directly include the private sector and workers in targets and actions.** Many countries’ NDCs (e.g., Colombia) include explicit targets involving private and public companies. In Barbados, businesses and financial institutions could engage with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), enhancing the robustness and credibility of their pledges while aligning them with Paris Agreement goals. Similar mechanisms exist for cities, including the Global Covenant of Mayors. Barbados also has several commercial state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that could be encouraged to participate. EBMOs can play a proactive role by motivating and supporting their members (SMEs are eligible). For trade unions, participation in SOE boards or within unionised companies engaged in climate-related commitments could provide valuable exposure, capacity building, and learning opportunities. Integrating private-sector and worker participation into NDC targets would help ensure broader ownership, accountability, and implementation momentum.

► Conclusion

Barbados offers a compelling example of how small island states can link climate ambition with social partnership. Its pathway toward a Just Transition is built on long-standing traditions of dialogue and shared commitment. Through frameworks such as Mission Barbados, NDC 2025, and the Decent Work Country Programme 2025–2030, the country is integrating economic transformation, environmental resilience, and social justice into a single agenda.

Across successive NDCs, Barbados has progressively refined its goals—moving to ambitious yet aligned goals and agenda. The inclusion of a dedicated Just Transition section in NDC 2025 marks a significant step forward, signalling recognition that climate targets must be accompanied by fair, inclusive, and job-creating pathways.

From a tripartite perspective, the Government provides the enabling environment, coordination mechanisms, and acts as the main implementer; EBMOs translate policies into enterprise realities and promote innovation and inclusive growth; and workers' organisations safeguard decent work, equality, and skill planning. Together, these actors are shaping a transition that is nationally owned.

At the same time, Barbados' economic recovery, growing green finance ecosystem, and leadership in debt-for-nature and debt-for-climate swaps create tangible opportunities. Renewable energy, blue economy activities, waste management, and green construction stand out as major sources of future jobs—estimated at around 1,500 in the energy sector alone by 2035. Yet realising this potential requires targeted action to close skills gaps, strengthen MSME financial access, and ensure that vulnerable groups—women, youth, and informal workers—are fully included.

The case's recommendations offer **practical recommendations, of which the following are highlighted:** First, revitalising and aligning social dialogue spaces so that Just Transition remains a standing agenda across the Social Partnership, Mission Boards, and sectoral policies. Second, mobilising and simplifying access to green and blue finance through instruments such as the Blue Green Bank and the Environmental Sustainability Fund. Third, accelerating training reform—linking TVET, apprenticeships, and new short courses to emerging green occupations. Fourth, promoting social partners' ownership and active participation in the NDC to connect climate goals with world of work needs.

Barbados' experience confirms that sustained tripartite engagement holds potential to translate ambition into results and shared planning. Its lessons can help other Caribbean nations establish consensus around their vision and build transitions that are not only low-carbon but also fair, inclusive, and firmly rooted in social dialogue.

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