



International
Labour
Organization

► NDC 2.0 Review in the Arab States

Regional report of the integration of just transition themes in the Nationally Determined Contributions across the Arab States

Regional Office Arab States

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► Executive Summary

The Paris Agreement is widely considered the most important international agreement on climate change. However, it is not only a landmark treaty that unites nearly every nation on the topic of climate change, but also the basis for international ambition and accountability. The Paris Agreement touches upon key elements of climate action and policies, while also affirming “the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities”. Since the conception of the Paris Agreement in 2015, just transition has gained momentum and uptake, particularly in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

The NDCs are integral to the Paris Agreement and represent national plans and strategies for countries to meet their climate commitments. NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Together, these NDCs determine whether the world achieves the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement. Currently, the world is not on track, and ambitions must be heightened through the next round of NDCs which are to be submitted in 2025. A failure to increase ambition in these new NDCs and start delivering immediately would put the world on course for a temperature increase of 2.6-3.1°C over the course of this century (UNEP, 2024). This would bring debilitating impacts to the planet, people, jobs, and economies worldwide.

This report reviews the NDCs as submitted to the UNFCCC NDC portal by July 2024, according to the 9 policy areas of the guidelines, as per the ILO *Guidelines for a just transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (hereafter referred to as the ILO Just Transition Guidelines), and present short country summaries, as well as a regional analysis and comparison to global averages. The review follows the global methodology developed by EPFL with ILO oversight, using a structured coding process combining manual analysis and keyword searches. It assesses explicit references to just transition and related themes such as employment, decent work, social inclusion, and key policy areas (e.g., skills development, social protection). The findings reflect the content of NDCs at the time of retrieval and do not assess implementation or policies outside the NDC framework.

Thereby, this report provides a regional perspective to the global NDC review developed by the ILO from 2024, “*Mapping Just Transition in NDCs: An overview.*” This paper provides a mapping of how just transition and relevant considerations have been addressed in NDCs by looking at the uptake of key terms and concepts. It complements other exercises of a similar type, including the UNFCCC synthesis reports and a paper on this topic by UNDP. This regional report also serves as a level of comparison for future NDCs planned for submission by COP30 in 2025. Thereby, this report will take stock of how countries increasingly integrate employment and decent work dimensions in the scope of their NDCs.

Key findings

11 out of 12 countries in the Arab States region have submitted their NDCs, with Yemen having submitted an intended-NDC (as they have not ratified the Paris Agreement)¹. The study found, that **three out of 11 the Arab Countries NDCs make explicit references to just transition** (UAE, Lebanon and the State of Palestine), see **Error! Reference source not found.** However, the just transition references tend to be broader, and none of the NDCs include dedicated sections or chapters on just transition as seen in some NDCs in other regions.

Just transition policy areas (meaning the 9 policy areas of a just transition, as per the ILO Just Transition Guidelines) are generally more present in non-GCC countries than those in the GCC. In oil producing countries (such as the GCC countries and Iraq), national plans focus on economic diversification. This entails a great focus on enterprise

¹ This means, that while the Yemeni NDC has been analysed and included in this study, it does not figure as a part of the regional Arab States average. In other words, all averages are developed based on the NDCs from 11 countries, rather than 12 countries.

development, shifts in the energy mix, enhancements in energy efficiency in buildings, manufacturing, transportation, or also the use of sustainable agricultural and tourism practices. In developing countries (such as Lebanon and Jordan) there is a greater focus on climate change adaptation and the development impacts and from climate action. Whereas (I)NDCs developed by countries in conflict (such as Syria and Yemen) are relatively short and concise with limited focus on the social dimension of climate change and climate action. An exception is made in the submission from the State of Palestine (SoP), which is more than three times as long as that of Syria and Yemen and include both explicit just transition references as well as references to just transition policy areas such as employment, enterprise development, and skills.

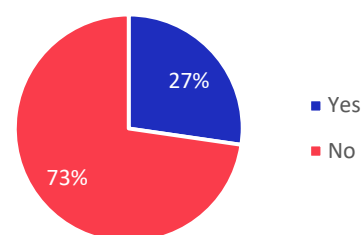
While just transition is rarely referenced in the regions' NDCs, employment and job creation are included in almost all the region's NDCs. **10 of 11 NDCs (91 per cent) include references to employment**, one of the highest regional inclusion rates globally. However, only four NDCs mention "green jobs," and references to "decent work" or job quality are rare (only Lebanon and Syria reference decent work in their NDCs), indicating a need to further awareness raising and focus on job quality and decent work in the region.

The region's coverage of the nine just transition policy areas from the ILO Just Transition Guidelines is uneven and often linked to the length of the NDC; the longer the NDC – the more policy areas the NDC tend to cover. Most common policy areas include skills development, enterprise policies, and active labour market policies. Meanwhile, other policy areas such as social protection, occupational safety and health (OSH), labour rights, and social dialogue are less considered. Figure 3 shows how many NDCs have included the various just transition policy areas (including Yemen).

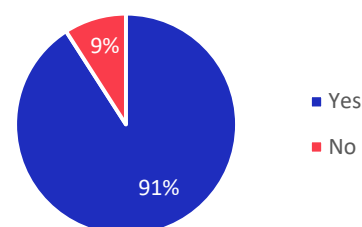
Active labour market policies are a regional strength, with several NDCs acknowledging the need to support worker adaptation, while social dialogue and labour rights are largely absent, limiting inclusive policy development and worker voice. Occupational safety and health (OSH) is gaining recognition but remains narrow in scope, often focusing primarily on heat stress rather than addressing broader climate risks.

Despite frequent reference to skills development policies (seven out of 11), none of the NDCs reference specifically technical and vocational education and training (TVET), indicating a lack of emphasis on technical skills – a surprising omission given that TVET is widely recognized as a critical skills set needed for the workforce during the transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies. Figure 3 below shows if an NDC in the region has made references to a certain just transition policy area (excluding Yemen).

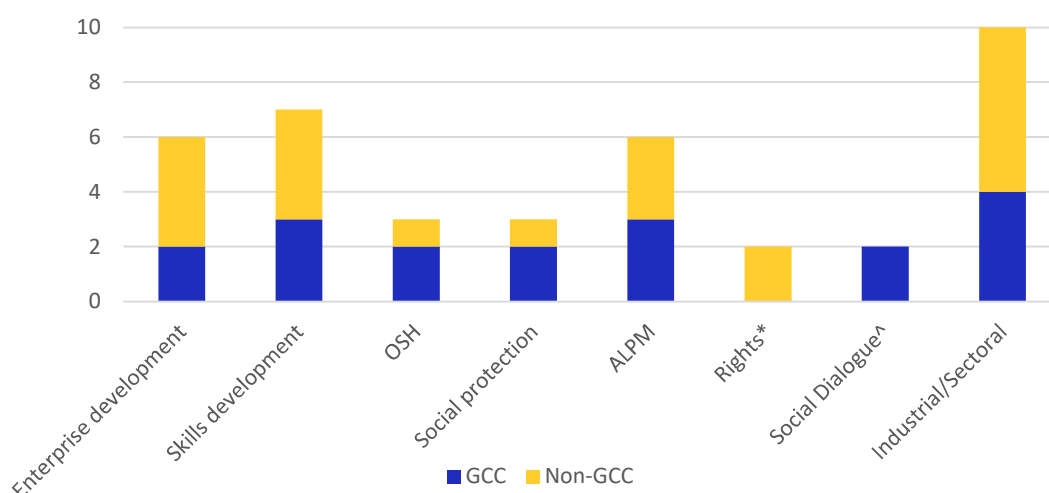
► **Figure 1 Just transition references in NDCs (out of 11 NDCs)**



► **Figure 2 Employment references in NDCs (out of 11 NDCs)**



► **Figure 3 Number of NDCs making reference to certain just transition policy areas (11 NDC)**



*While “rights” in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines refers to labour rights exclusively, this methodology captures references to both labour rights and human rights. However, in the case of the Arab States region, there are no references to labour rights, and the only occurrences refer to human rights.

^ While “social dialogue” in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines refers to social dialogue and tripartism, this methodology captures references to social dialogue, tripartism and stakeholder dialogue. In the case of the Arab States region, there are no references to social dialogue in the understanding of the ILO, but rather references to stakeholder dialogues, mostly with civil society.

Lessons learnt for the next round of NDCs

The next round of NDCs presents an opportunity for the Arab States’ countries to foster policy coherence amongst labour and climate policies by integrating just transition consideration in their NDC. This report has outlined regional trends in the integration of just transition policy areas. The report found the recommendations for deeper integration of just transition policy areas in the countries’ NDCs:

► **Dedicating space to just transition concerns in the NDCs**

Currently only 3 out of 12 countries refer to just transition in their NDC. None of the countries have dedicated just transition sections. Countries seeking to capture the social dimension of climate change and climate action may consider both to refer to just transition priorities as well as developing dedicated just transition chapters.

► **Widening the scope of NDCs to cover several social dimensions of just transition**

Longer NDCs tend to cover more just transition policy areas. With upcoming revision of NDCs, governments have the opportunity to broaden the coverage of the NDC and include more of the nine just transition policy areas.

► **Promoting social dialogue**

By basing the NDC revision process on social dialogue and stakeholder consultations the NDCs can capture a wider set of ambition and results from the World of Work. For example, by engaging with Ministries of Labour, the NDC may also capture any efforts by the government with regards to green job creation, decent work, occupational health and safety, social protection or similar. Likewise, by engaging employers’ and workers’ organisations the NDC can capture private and public sector climate action. Some countries have established inter-ministerial coordination bodies, expanding these to include social partners could be one entry point for institutionalised social dialogue.

► **Continue the capacity building of NDC focal points in government, as well as world of work**

Further capacity building on just transition planning is needed both in Ministries of Environment and amongst world of work actors. This will ensure that all parties have similar understanding of just transition concepts, fostering policy coherence and enabling NDC implementation.

Embedding just transition as a visible, operational, and measurable element of NDC 3.0, countries across the Arab States region have the chance to be just transition pioneers ensuring the climate action maximizes the economic and social opportunities while carefully managing any challenges that may arise.

► Introduction

1.1 About this report: Regional insights from a global NDC review

There are few places in the world, where climate change is as visceral and omnipresent as in the Arab States region². Temperatures in the Arab States' region are increasing twice as fast as the global average due to climate change. Droughts are already becoming more frequent and severe, exacerbating the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, including water scarcity (UNDP, 2023). Although countries' strategies and priorities across the region varies due to the distinct economic structures and climate vulnerabilities, they share the overarching challenge of balancing climate change and economic and social development. Climate change, often referred to as a risk multiplier, will amplify preexisting vulnerabilities stemming from conflict, displacement, marginalization, and corruption. Similarly, the transition itself can pose challenges for a region dependent on fossil fuels as a source of energy, employment, and government revenues (Wehrey, 2023).

However, managed well, transitioning to environmentally and socially sustainable economies can become a strong driver of job creation, economic growth, social justice, and poverty eradication according to a regional report by ILO and the Islamic Development Bank from 2023. The report found that, emerging green industries, such as renewable energy or sustainable agriculture and food security, alongside the greening of traditional sectors through energy efficiency and sustainable practices hold significant employment potential. In fact, ambitious climate action and industrial policies can create 10 million jobs across the Middle East and North Africa region. The shift to a low-carbon economy is reshaping labour markets, creating new jobs in green industries while transforming roles in sectors such as manufacturing and construction to align with sustainability criteria. At the same time, job losses are anticipated in fossil fuel industries. Beyond these direct effects, the report found that the transition also leads to indirect job effects in supply chains and supporting sectors – positive in areas like renewables, hydrogen, construction, and electric vehicles, and negatively in fossil fuels – as well as induced effects in other sectors due to evolving spending patterns from job creation or loss.

The shift to environmentally sustainable economies and societies is further advanced through climate policies. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) is an example of such climate policies, and they represent the efforts of each country (party to the Paris Agreement) to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Together, these NDCs determine whether the world achieves the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement. Thereby, the NDCs serve as key instruments for guiding climate action and signalling national commitments, while also offering a framework to integrate just transition principles into policy and implementation. However, as the NDCs are becoming more comprehensive to include economic and social aspects, the need for policy coherence with national plans and strategies beyond the climate and environment realm is increasingly important. Translating these commitments into effective policies, regulations, and investments is essential to ensure that the transition leads to meaningful socio-economic benefits. Ultimately, the NDCs offer a central entry point for advancing a just transition and addressing the employment and social dimensions of climate actions, and a key vehicle for signalling commitments and outlining priorities and actions.

A just transition is fundamental to realizing these benefits, ensuring that climate policies maximize economic and social opportunities from climate action, while carefully minimizing and managing any challenges that may arise from the transition. The ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (hereafter referred to as the ILO Just Transition Guidelines), outline 9 policy areas which can support countries carefully managing the transition, ensuring no one is left behind.

To track the development of the social dimension of climate change and just transition efforts in the NDCs, the ILO collaborated with the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) to conduct a global study assessing how just transition principles are reflected in NDCs. This study mapped the uptake of key terms and concepts, analysed how employment and social equity considerations are embedded in NDCs, and identified key patterns, variations and gaps. By examining these global patterns, the study provided valuable insights into the uptake of just transition themes in the NDC, revealing a significant increase in explicit references to just transition compared to earlier NDC submissions, yet highlighting that such references still are in only 39 per cent of all NDCs globally. It highlights wide variation in the depth of integration, with most NDCs lacking dedicated sections, follow-up mechanisms, or concrete implementation measures. The analysis also identified gaps in the inclusion of key policy areas – such as decent

² In the case of the ILO regional division, the Arab States region refers to the countries Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

work, social protection, occupational safety and health, and social dialogue – which are critical for ensuring an inclusive and effective transition.

This report builds on the global analysis to provide a focused assessment of just transition commitments in the Arab States' region. It serves as both a regional summary of the global dataset and a deeper analysis of NDCs across Arab states, examining if and how key policy areas have been addressed to support a just transition. Ultimately, the report aims to inform and engage policy makers, social partners, civil society, researchers and the public to support ongoing efforts in strengthening just transition provisions in climate plans and to guiding future revisions of NDCs, particularly ahead of the next round of submissions in 2025.

Methodology

The dataset used in this report was developed by the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), with technical support and oversight from the ILO. The dataset used in this analysis covers the most recent NDCs of the 193 countries that have submitted NDCs in the UNFCCC portal by 12 July 2024. EPFL coded the 193 NDCs and produced the dataset, and the ILO provided technical support. The coding process involved a detailed review of each NDC, combining manual text analysis with keyword searches of relevant terms. EPFL and the ILO designed a predefined set of criteria and structured coding instructions to ensure a consistent and systematic approach across all reviewed countries. The dataset includes 25 variables and 16 keywords, capturing various aspects of just transition within the NDCs. Primarily, the dataset examines explicit references to just transition, as well as the extent to which employment, decent work, social inclusion, and social equity are reflected in national commitments. The analysis considers the frequency and prominence of just transition references, including dedicated sections within NDCs, as well as mentions of institutional mechanisms, follow-up instruments, and international cooperation supporting just transition implementation.

This report includes the NDC submissions from the Arab States countries, except for Yemen, which has submitted an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (I-NDC), as Yemen is not a signatory to the Paris Agreement. As a result, Yemen's I-NDC is not included in the global dataset and does not contribute to averages presented in the ILO's global nor this regional study. However, when and if Yemen's I-NDC has been included in some parts of the analysis throughout, it will be indicated as referring to a 12 countries average/percentage, rather than for 11 countries.

An important aspect of this mapping is the analysis of the extent to which references related to just transition policy areas outlined in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines are addressed. It is important to note that significant variation exists in how extensively different policy areas are included in the NDCs. Some NDCs may briefly mention a specific policy area, such as skills development or social protection, without outlining concrete measures or implementation strategies. In contrast, other NDCs provide more details or specific actions. The dataset developed for this analysis considers the inclusion of these policy areas in a broad manner by accounting for any references to them, regardless of the level of detail provided. Therefore, this report also depends on a qualitative review of the regional NDCs focusing on how different policy areas are addressed.

As this review focuses exclusively on NDCs, it does not capture just transition policies or references embedded in other national frameworks, policy documents or initiatives. Moreover, this analysis does not evaluate the extent to which NDC commitments have been effectively translated into policy implementation. Instead, it provides a statistical snapshot of just transition integration at the time of NDC retrieval. As countries periodically update their NDCs, future analyses will be necessary to track progress and the evolution of commitments.

1.2 Climate change: A global challenge with nationally driven solutions

Meeting Paris agreement targets depends on the implementation of climate policies at the national level. Policy measures that are centred around reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are referred to as **mitigation strategies**, primarily through the decarbonization, resource efficiency, and carbon sequestration. Even with intensive mitigation efforts, the climate will continue to change. While these mitigation strategies aim to slow the pace of climate change, they cannot prevent existing and future effects of climate change already visible and impacting many areas of the world. This is why countries need to build and increase their resilience to climate change's current and future effects through **adaptation strategies**. Adaptation measures include reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts like extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and resource scarcity, while also

building resilience to these changes. Other adaptation efforts may include strengthening social protection systems to support people losing their jobs or income due to climate change or climate policies.

Since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Parties to the Convention have met annually at UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (referred to the COPs) to address climate change. In 2015, to enhance the implementation of the UNFCCC and to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, the Conference of the Parties adopted the Paris Agreement at COP21.

The Parties committed to holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The goal is to reduce GHG emissions coupled with removal processes, thereby reaching global carbon neutrality, or net-zero emissions, by the second half of the century. The Paris Agreement also took into account the imperatives of ensuring a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs (in the preamble text). In 2023, the focus on just transition plans was further strengthened under the UNFCCC with the establishment of the Just Transition Work Programme during COP28 in the UAE.

A key instrument and innovation of the Paris Agreement is the introduction of non-binding national plans to mitigate climate change. Countries articulate their commitments to these objectives through their NDCs, which outline their post-2020 climate actions. NDCs are submitted every five years to the UNFCCC secretariat, with updated or new NDCs representing increasingly higher climate ambitions. Countries were requested to submit the second round of NDCs (updated or new) by 2020 and every five years thereafter (UNFCCC, n.d.a). Thereby, the next round of NDCs is due by 2025. These NDCs have become an important policy response to climate change. More than 100 countries have updated their first NDCs, new NDCs have been adopted, and an increasing number have developed specific net-zero pledges, national strategies and laws.

1.3 Just transition: The social dimension of climate change and climate policies

The ILO constituents have been at the forefront of the just transition agenda for more than a decade. The ILO Just Transition Guidelines provide governments and social partners with a comprehensive roadmap for managing this transition. They are built around a set of guiding principles, including social dialogue, fundamental principles and rights at work, gender equality, policy coherence, decent work, no-one size fits all, and international cooperation. The Guidelines outline concrete policy recommendations for governments, workers', and employers' organizations across nine policy areas (See Text Box 1).

The urgency of promoting a just transition has gained further international recognition. In June 2023, the 111th annual International Labour Conference adopted a resolution on just transition, underscoring that advancing a just transition is imperative for achieving social justice, eradicating poverty, and supporting decent work, while tackling the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. The Conference also officially endorsed the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, reaffirming their relevance as a cornerstone for shaping inclusive climate policies.

► Text Box 1 ILO's Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all

The 2015 ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* shape pathways to a just transition by outlining nine key policy areas essential for ensuring that the shift to environmentally sustainable economies is fair, inclusive, and supportive of decent work. These areas provide a comprehensive framework for governments, social partners, and stakeholders to design and implement policies that balance economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity. The nine policy areas include:

- I. **Macroeconomic and Growth Policies:** that promote sustainable development while ensuring that economic growth aligns with environmental goals, job creation, and social equity.
- II. **Industrial and Sectoral Policies:** that support low-carbon industries and sustainable production, driving green job creation and economic transformation.
- III. **Enterprise Policies:** that create an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises and enhance the resilience of businesses, especially MSMEs.
- IV. **Skills Development Policies:** that support investing in education, vocational training, and upskilling programs to equip workers with the skills needed for green jobs and emerging sectors.
- V. **Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Policies:** that protect workers from new risks associated with extreme weather, environmental hazards, and evolving industries.
- VI. **Social Protection Policies:** that expand comprehensive social protection systems, ensuring income security, unemployment benefits, and retraining support for workers affected by the transition.
- VII. **Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) Policies:** that facilitate job transitions through targeted employment programs and public employment services, especially for unemployed workers or those at risk of unemployment.
- VIII. **Rights:** Policies must respect, promote and realize fundamental principles and labour rights.
- IX. **Social Dialogue and Tripartism:** that foster inclusive engagement between governments, employers, and workers to build consensus and ensure transparent, participatory decision-making.

IN 2023, the ILO 111th International Labour Conference endorsed the guidelines through the *Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*. The resolution underlined the need for integrating **just transition measures into NDCs** and other climate policies, and into coherent, integrated, and comprehensive employment, social protection, and industrial policies, amongst others.

Sources: *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (ILO, 2015) ; *Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (ILO, 2023d)

Key Insights from the ILO's Global Mapping of Just Transition in NDCs

ILO's paper "Mapping Just Transition in NDCs: An overview" from 2024 provides a global review on the uptake of just transition policies and thematics in the NDCs and a baseline for monitoring trends. The mapping revealed significant variations in the extent to which countries integrate explicit references to just transition, employment considerations, social equity, and key policy areas into their national climate commitments (ILO, 2024b).

While just transition is increasingly recognized in international climate policy (e.g. with the reference to just transition in the Paris Agreement of 2015 or the adoption of the UAE Just Transition Work Programme both under UNFCCC) only 39 per cent of the submitted NDC explicitly reference the term, with higher-income nations incorporating it more frequently than lower-income ones. Regional disparities are evident, with the percentage of countries making explicit references ranging from as low as 15 per cent in Asia-Pacific and 19 per cent in Africa to 70 per cent in Europe and Central Asia. As for references to employment-related terms, these are present in a more than half of NDCs (67 per cent). However, only a small fraction explicitly mentions decent work (10 per cent) or green jobs (13 per cent), indicating that while employment is acknowledged, the quality of the jobs and just transition remain insufficiently addressed.

Moreover, the breadth of just transition-related policy areas covered in NDCs varies. On average, countries reference about three out of the nine just transition policy areas (e.g., skills development, social protection, enterprise policies, occupational safety and health, ALPMs, rights, social dialogue and tripartism). Countries that do

not reference just transition tend to include fewer policy elements, reinforcing the link between explicit commitments and comprehensive policy integration.

As the NDCs are becoming more elaborate, they are also increasingly including considerations of ensuring a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies. However, the integration of the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda and the nine key policy areas of the ILO Just Transition Guidelines is uneven. It is particularly concerning that employers' and workers' organizations report that they are frequently not included in the formulation and implementation of NDCs, despite one of the guiding principles for a just transition being social dialogue. These findings underscore the need for stronger commitments and concrete implementation measures to ensure that just transition principles are effectively embedded in climate action plans.

1.4 Report objectives and key finding: Just transition gaps in Arab states

The main objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the status of just transition integration into NDCs in the Arab States region. This stock take of just transition integration in NDCs will allow to monitor the trends in the uptake of just transition and its related policy areas.

The primary objective of this report is to support policymakers, social partners, and other stakeholders in the Arab States in advancing more inclusive and coherent climate action by strengthening the integration of just transition principles into future NDCs. To this end, the report provides a regional stocktaking of how just transition – along with related social and employment considerations and policy areas– has been reflected in current NDC submissions.

Reviewing NDCs across Arab states revealed that many committed to specific GHG emission targets and identified renewable energy technologies that hold the most promise for their sustainable energy trajectories. Several countries have developed national strategies aimed at economic transformation and diversification, highlighting sectors with substantial potential for improved energy efficiency, which in turn can contribute to GHG emission reduction while simultaneously generating employment opportunities. However, what was strikingly lacking in Arab states policies were robust just transition measures. Even in countries with more developed climate and economic policy frameworks, aspects like social protection, skills development, occupational safety, and social dialogue were either absent or sparingly outlined.

While many Arab countries have linked climate action with economic diversification and sectoral development, the incorporation of measures to ensure a just and inclusive transition remains limited. Only a three out of 11 countries explicitly reference **just transition** in their NDC, and where it is mentioned, the references tend to be broad, lacking dedicated sections, implementation strategies, or follow-up mechanisms.

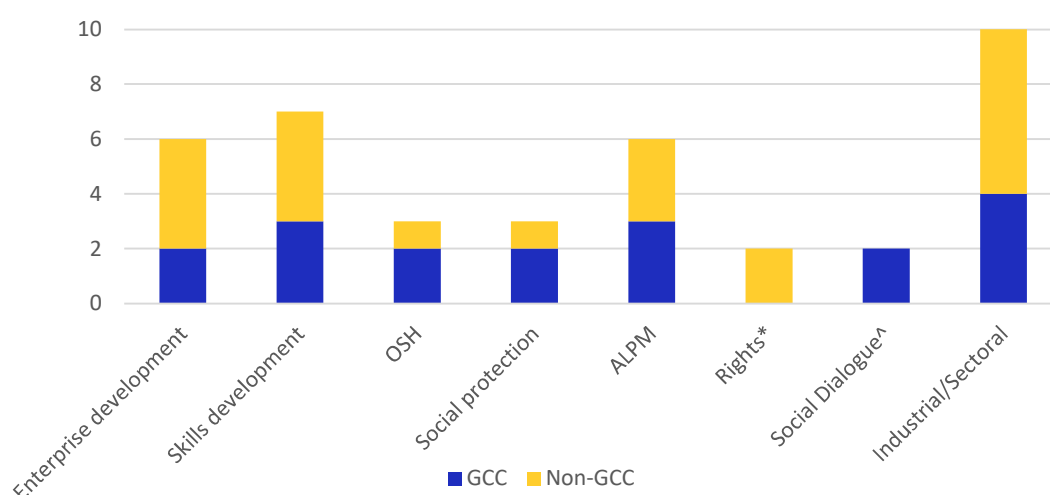
Employment is more widely acknowledged (in 10 out of 11 NDCs in the region), yet this focus rarely extends to job quality, the promotion of decent work (only 2 out of 11 NDCs), or the development of green jobs (3 out of 11). Social equity and inclusion terms such as gender considerations are even less visible (4 out of 11 NDCs).

Most Arab States include **macroeconomic, industrial, and sectoral policy** measures in their NDCs (10 out of 11 NDCs). However, these are generally oriented toward growth and diversification objectives, rather than framed within a just transition approach, and they often neglect employment and social implications. The integration of core just transition policy areas is uneven and fragmented: while some NDCs address skills development, enterprise support, or active labour market policies, others, such as **social protection, occupational safety and health (OSH), labour rights, and social dialogue, are largely absent**. For uptake of various just transition policy areas in GCC and non-GCC countries see Figure 4 below.

These findings point to the need for Arab States to go beyond general references and take deliberate steps to explicitly embed just transition principles and policy areas into their next NDC submissions. Doing so will be critical to aligning climate action with social justice and decent job creation goals across the region.

In the region, three out of 11 countries (27 per cent) mention just transition in their NDCs. 10 out of 11 NDCs (91 per cent) mention employment, amongst the highest regional averages in the World.

► **Figure 4 Number of NDCs making reference to certain just transition policy areas (11 NDCs)**



*While “rights” in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines refers to labour rights exclusively, this methodology captures references to both labour rights and human rights. However, in the case of the Arab States region, there are no references to labour rights, and the only occurrences refer to human rights.

^ While “social dialogue” in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines refers to social dialogue and tripartism, this methodology captures references to social dialogue, tripartism and stakeholder dialogue. In the case of the Arab States region, there are no references to social dialogue in the understanding of the ILO, but rather references to stakeholder dialogues, mostly with civil society.

As **Yemen** is not yet signatories of the Paris Agreement, they have submitted an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in 2015. The data from this INDC is not a part of the regional or global averages in this report, but rather summarised in Table 1 below, for readers’ full overview of the Arab States Region NDCs and INDC. The table summarises the just transition policy areas mentioned in Yemen’s INDC, including percentages of the uptake in the world, region, and amongst other low-income countries. Yemen refers to employment in their INDC, but not to just transition nor green jobs or other related themes to just transition.

► **Table 1 Summary of Just Transition Policy Areas in Yemen’s INDC**

Just Transition policy areas	Yemen	Non- GCC	Arab States	Low- Income	World
Enterprise policies	No	80%	55%	56%	56%
Skills development policies	Yes	80%	64%	84%	53%
Occupational safety and health	No	20%	27%	4%	9%
Social protection and other support	No	20%	18%	44%	49%
Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs)	No	60%	55%	28%	33%
Rights	No	40%	18%	44%	51%
Social dialogue and tripartism	No	0%	18%	20%	18%
Macroeconomic and growth policies*	No	80%	91%	88%	90%
Industrial and sectoral policies*	Yes	100%	82%	96%	90%

*Note: The table above shows the share of countries referencing each policy area in Yemen’s comparison groups: Non-GCC countries, Arab States region, Low-income countries, and World. * Not necessarily oriented towards JT*

► Climate action in the Arab States

2.1 Climate change and economic structures in the Arab States' region

As the stark realities of climate change and environmental degradation become increasingly visible, the urgency to address climate change has never been more pressing. This threat offers a moment of opportunity for profound economic and social transformation. Amid this global imperative, the Arab States' situation lends even greater significance to climate action. These countries are on the frontlines of climate change impacts, grappling with escalating risks such as rising sea levels and more frequent heatwaves, floods, and droughts (UN ESCWA, 2017; UNFCCC, 2022). GCC countries' vast desert landscapes and coastal cities make them particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures and sea levels as well as periods of extreme heat. Similarly, across the Arab States region, countries face climate impacts such as diminishing water resources, reduced agricultural yields, and extreme weather events, and heat stress. At the same time, Arab States' countries present a compelling case for coupling climate action with economic restructuring, especially for oil producing countries and regions. Historically, factors such as limited economic diversification, mismatches between skills development systems and labour market needs, and other structural issues have translated into chronic deficits in decent work opportunities, especially for the youth and women (ILO, 2022a, 2024a). Years of geopolitical tensions, prolonged conflicts, and economic crises have magnified labour market challenges and exacerbated unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

Climate change effects, such as drought or extreme heat have implications on jobs, livelihoods, and economic development. For example, climate change is linked to several occupational health and safety hazards such as heat stress, UV radiation, workplace pollution, vector-borne diseases, toxication and OSH related risks from extreme weather events (ILO, 2024c).

The Arab states encompass a diverse group of countries, varying in population size, land area, access to natural resources, and economic development. The resource-rich, high-income countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have their economies historically dependent on the oil and gas industry. Their labour markets are highly segmented, with nationals concentrated in public sector employment, and a private sector largely reliant on expatriate workers. While GCC countries face intensifying climate risks – particularly extreme heat, drought, and desertification– they generally have greater fiscal capacity and institutional resources to invest in climate adaptation and mitigation measures. GCC countries are increasingly developing national plans to diversify their economies and accelerate their energy transitions while balancing economic and social stability.

In contrast, non-GCC Arab states, including middle-income countries (i.e., Jordan, and Lebanon) and conflict-affected, low-income countries (i.e., Syria, Yemen and more recently OPT) generally have more diverse economic structures than the oil-dependent GCC economies. However, many still rely heavily on agriculture, tourism, services, remittances, or oil (as is the case for Iraq), and continue to grapple with persistent economic and political instability. These challenges limit private sector growth and job creation, weaken public institutions, and constrain their ability to design and implement appropriate development strategies. As a result, unemployment, informality and working poverty remain widespread with limited social protection (ILO, 2023g). Unlike the GCC, their limited fiscal space and institutional capacity significantly hinder their ability to implement robust climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, exacerbating socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, Arab States' region exhibit the highest and fastest-growing youth unemployment rates globally. Young women face even greater challenges, with unemployment rates notably exceeding young men and the global average (ILO, 2022a).

2.3 Climate action and national climate policies in the Arab States' region

In the same way that climate change impacts jobs and livelihood, the way countries respond to climate change, whether through climate change mitigation or climate adaptation efforts, will have implications and effect on jobs and livelihoods.

The response to climate change varies across the region depending on the threats climate change pose to the country, and the economic and labour market set up of the countries (as discussed in the previous section). As major oil and gas producers, the GCC countries (and Iraq) are typically more vulnerable to global and national decarbonization plans. Conversely, many non-GCC Arab states are among the least contributors to climate change, due to smaller industrial bases and less (or non-existent) fossil fuel production. Their constrained adaptive capacities further exacerbate these vulnerabilities. Although their strategies and priorities diverge due to distinct economic structures and climate vulnerabilities, both groups share the overarching challenge of navigating an economic transformation that expands productive and decent employment opportunities.

According to research by the ILO and the Islamic Development Bank, climate action and the transition to environmentally sustainable economies will become socio-economic imperatives for countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to address persisting issues and foster economic transformation and the creation of more and better jobs. The study estimates that the MENA region could create 10 million new jobs, and accelerate GDP to 7.2 per cent and employment to 5.3 per cent in less than three decades, through strong industrial and climate development policies (ILO & Islamic Development Bank, 2023).

However, achieving such results would require MENA countries to adopt strong industrial policies, link climate to development policies, and further invest in climate resilience, green water desalination, reforestation and waste management. Ensuring a holistic policy response to climate change, built on social dialogue, labour rights, and decent work is key. Ultimately, just transition policies and frameworks can help governments, workers', and employers organizations in designing and implementing such job-rich climate policies. Countries' NDCs are examples of such entry points for just transition plans, as they are a key pillar of national climate action. Yet, the NDCs are only one component of a broader climate policy framework. Countries also develop long-term low-emissions development strategies, national climate action plans, sector-specific policies, and adaptation frameworks to implement and expand their climate commitments. While national policies shape the commitments made in NDCs, the NDCs themselves can also drive the creation of new policies and the strengthening of existing ones, ensuring that countries remain on track to meet their climate goals. In recent years, Arab States have increasingly developed laws, regulations, strategies, and policies to support climate action.

As signatories of the Paris Agreement, 11 of the 12 countries in the Arab States region have submitted their NDCs, laying out their approaches to mitigate GHG emissions and adapt to evolving climate conditions. Yemen (who is one of 4 countries³ globally, who have not signed the Paris Agreement) have submitted an intended NDC (I-NDC). Most countries have updated their first NDCs including Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The UAE and Oman have gone a step further by adopting second and third NDCs, setting the ambitious goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and, more recently, Kuwait have announced their goals of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, even if not yet stated in their latest NDCs. Nearly all countries have set emissions reduction targets in their NDCs – unconditional and conditional – for carbon emissions reduction by 2030, with varying degrees of ambition.

In their NDCs, Arab States' countries outline their national commitments and plans towards transitioning to low-carbon economies. These are reflected within national economic strategies that specify priority sectors deemed to have significant greening potential, accompanied by sectoral plans tailored to develop these sectors. In the countries traditionally dependent on the oil and gas industry, national plans focus on economic diversification and to some degree carbon capture. Not only does this contribute to reaching their climate objectives but also ensures their future economic stability. For these oil-exporting countries, stimulating new sectors is essential to diversify their revenue sources amidst a global transition to renewable energy. Across the region, both GCC and non-GCC countries are supporting various sustainability initiatives. This entails shifts in the energy mix, enhancements in energy efficiency in buildings, industries, transportation, and the use of sustainable agricultural and tourism practices, among others (See Table 2**Error! Reference source not found.** and Table 3)

³ There are now 4 countries globally who are not signatories to the Paris agreement, as the United States of America have pulled out of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

► Table 2 Emissions targets and priority sectors in the NDCs of GCC countries

NDC references:	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Year of submission	2021	2021	2023	2021	2021	2023
GHG emissions reduction	6 per cent reduction of <u>energy consumption</u> by 2025	7.4 per cent reduction by 2035 relative to BAU	7 per cent by 2030 relative to BAU Net zero by 2050	25 per cent reduction by 2030 relative to 2019	Reduction of 278MT of CO ₂ eq annually by 2030	40 per cent reduction by 2030 relative to BAU (19 per cent reduction relative to 2019) Net zero by 2050
Renewable energy	Solar, wind, and biogas	-	Solar PV, wind and Green Hydrogen	Solar and hydrogen	Solar PV, CSP, wind, geothermal energy, waste to energy, and green hydrogen	Solar PV, CSP, nuclear energy, and hydrogen
Economic strategy and/or sectoral plans	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan; National Renewable Energy Action Plan	New Kuwait 2035	Oman Vision 2040; National Energy Strategy; The Sultanate of Oman's National Strategy for an Orderly Transition to Net Zero; Environmental Policy for the Energy Sector	Qatar's National Vision 2030; National Development Strategy	Vision 2030; National Renewable Energy Program; Saudi Energy Efficiency Program; National Hydrogen Strategy.	UAE Green Agenda 2015-2030; National Climate Change Plan 2017-2050; UAE Energy Strategy 2050; UAE Net Zero 2050 Strategic Initiative; Circular Economy Policy 2031
Priority sectors for greening economies	Financial services, ICT, industry, logistics, tourism, and oil	Energy, IPPU, agriculture, forestry, and land use	Energy efficiency, Renewable energy, Hydrogen, Carbon capture, Water Management, Agriculture, Construction and building	Oil & gas, power & water, transportation, building & industry, R&D, education, tourism.	Manufacturing, energy, energy-related derivatives, mining, tourism, logistics, and IT industries. Energy efficiency in industry, building & land transportation.	Renewable energy, oil and gas, industry, transport, buildings, waste management, water management, agriculture
Source: Author's compilation from NDCs of GCC countries https://unfccc.int/NDCREG						

► **Table 3 Emissions targets and priority sectors in the NDCs of non-GCC countries**

NDC references:	Iraq	Jordan	Lebanon	OPT	Syria	Yemen
Year of submission	2021	2021	2020	2021	2018	2015
GHG emissions reduction	Conditional: 15 per cent reduction by 2030 Unconditional: 1 per cent -2 per cent reduction	31 per cent reduction by 2030 relative to BAU Unconditional: 5 per cent Conditional: 26 per cent	Unconditional 20 per cent reduction by 2030 relative to BAU And 31 per cent conditional	17.5 per cent reduction by 2040 relative to BAU If independence is achieved: 26.6 per cent	-	14 per cent reduction by 2030 relative to BAU. 1 per cent unconditional, 13 per cent conditional
Renewable energy	Solar and wind	Solar, wind, and hydrogen	Hydropower, onshore wind, solar power*	Solar	Solar, wind, and hydropower	Solar and wind
Economic strategy and/or sectoral plans	-	National Green Growth Plan; Green Growth National Action Plan; NDC Action Plan; National Energy Sector Strategy	CEDRE-CIP; Lebanon Economic Vision; Government Financial Recovery Plan	National Development Plan	-	National Strategy for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency; National Water Sector Strategy and Investment Program
Priority sectors for greening economies	oil, gas, electricity, industry, trade, agriculture, transport, waste, and housing	Energy, water, agriculture, tourism, transport, and waste.	Energy, transport, forestry and land-use, agriculture, waste, and industrial sectors.	Agriculture, energy, health, transport, waste, and water.	-	Energy, transport, industry, services, agriculture and fisheries, forestry, waste.
* Not explicitly mentioned in NDC. However, these renewable energy options are indicated in the 2020 IRENA <i>Renewable Energy Outlook: Lebanon</i> which is mentioned in the NDC as considered together with other plans and reports to "form Lebanon's international commitment". Source: Author's compilation from NDCs of non-GCC countries						

► Integration of Just Transition in Arab States' countries' NDCs

This section maps the integration of just transition within the NDCs of Arab States' countries, analyzing both explicit references to the concept and the inclusion of related policy areas. The analysis draws on data from a mapping exercise covering the Arab states, excluding Yemen, which has prepared an Intended NDC (I-NDC). As such, Yemen is not included in this regional analysis, in line with the methodology used in the ILO's global study.⁴ Accordingly, all frequencies and percentages presented in this section are calculated based on a total of 11 Arab states: 6 GCC countries and 5 non-GCC countries.

The following provides an overview of general trends across the Arab States region, highlighting gaps and opportunities for improvement. Thereby, this analysis offers an assessment of the current state of just transition within Arab States' countries' NDCs and highlights pathways for strengthening these frameworks in future updates.

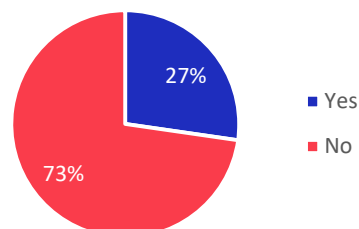
3.1 Key Trends in the Integration of Just Transition and Related Concepts Across the Arab States Region's NDCs

Just transition references in the NDCs

An important aspect of evaluating the integration of just transition into NDCs is assessing explicit references to the term **just transition** and the frequency of such mentions. This provides critical insights into the extent to which the concept has been embraced across the Arab States region and how it compares to global trends.

In the Arab States, 27 per cent of countries, or three out of 11 country NDCs⁵, explicitly reference **just transition** in their NDCs. However, these references remain general in nature rather than outlining specific implementation measures. The UAE's NDC states that "the UAE also pursues a just energy transition ensuring that no one is left behind." Lebanon's NDC highlights just transition as a social and economic priority, stating that "Lebanon prioritizes a just transition through the consideration of the socio-economic status of the most vulnerable, adopting a gender-responsive approach." Likewise, the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) references just transition in the context of gender and climate policy, noting that "gender-responsive implementation of climate policy and action can raise ambition, enhance gender equality, and promote a just transition of the workforce."

► Figure 5 Just transition references in NDCs (out of 11 NDCs)



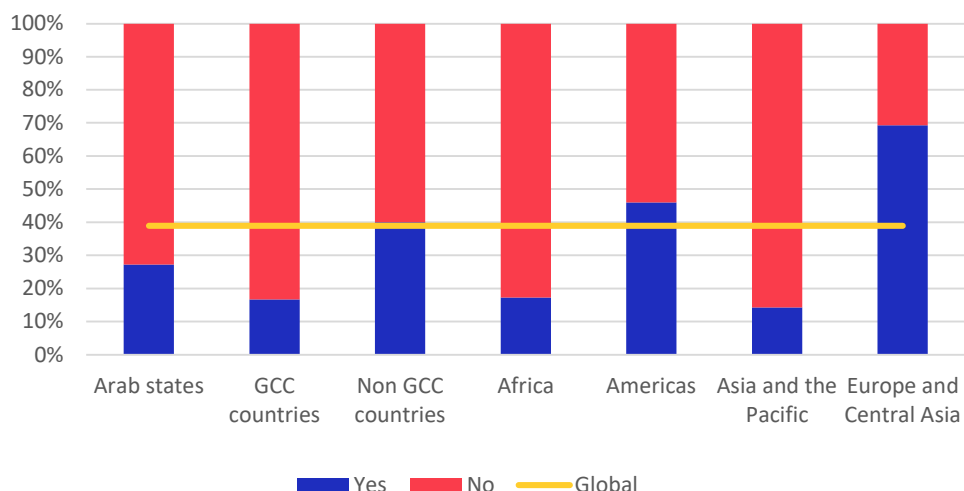
In all cases, the references are only occurring once per NDC, and do not expand into just transition chapters. This mirrors a global trend, where only 6 per cent of NDCs (12 countries globally) include dedicated just transition sections, primarily in the Americas and Europe and Central Asia. While high-income countries are the most likely to feature these sections, they remain uncommon across all income groups.

Just transition references are more frequent in the Arab States region compared to those in Africa (19 per cent) and Asia and the Pacific (15 per cent), it falls well behind Europe and Central Asia (70 per cent) and the Americas (51 per cent) (See Figure 6). However, the percentage averages can be misleading as the Arab States region is much smaller than for example Africa and Asia Pacific. Yet, more countries in the Arab States region could include just transition references for the next round of NDCs, especially that more than half of the Arab countries studied are high-income (6 GCC countries out of the 11 Arab States with available data). This is particularly notable when compared to global trends, where high-income countries lead in uptake, with 62 per cent explicitly referencing just transition – whereas the UAE is the only high-income country in the region referencing just transition. Lastly, it can not be taken for a

⁵ Namely the UAE, Lebanon and OPT.

given, that countries who currently refer to just transition will do so moving forward. For example, Oman's 2021 NDC included five references to just transition, its 2023 update makes no mention of the term.

► **Figure 6 Just transition mentions in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC, and global regions**



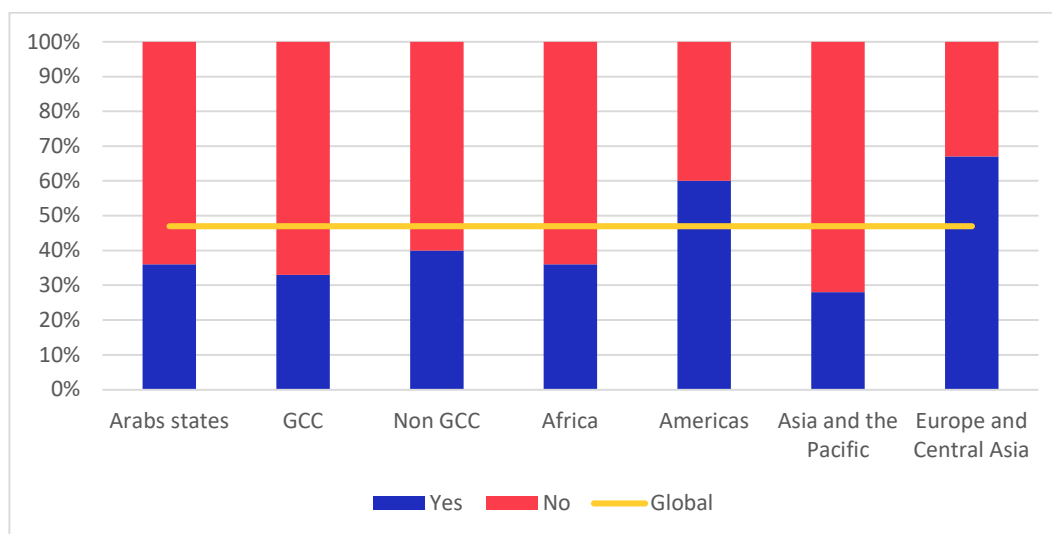
Guidance on policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, and follow-up measures is essential for translating just transition commitments into concrete actions. However, only 19 per cent of NDCs globally reference specific follow-up instruments or arrangements for just transition. In the Arab States, none of the NDCs refer to policy frameworks or institutional arrangements related to just transition. Especially the high-income countries in the region, are thereby falling behind global trends, where 47 per cent include such measures, highlighting a significant gap in the region's approach to implementation.

The same is true for the allocation of specific **financial resources** and **international cooperation** for a just transition. Globally, only 1 per cent of NDCs reference the allocation of dedicated resources, with Arab States at 0 per cent. Similarly, international cooperation, encompassing partnerships, support for developing countries, and technical assistance, is mentioned by 16 per cent of countries worldwide. High-income countries lead with 43 per cent including such references, while lower-middle-income and low-income countries, as well as Arab States, make no mention of international cooperation for a just transition in their NDCs.

One of the guiding principles for a just transition is the need to leave no one behind. Therefore, the study also mapped how well themes of inclusion and **social justice** was included in NDCs. While Arab States demonstrate some attention to concepts like "discrimination" and "social justice," their overall inclusion of social equity and inclusion in NDCs remains limited at 36 per cent, falling below the global average of 47 per cent. This level of inclusion is matching Africa (36 per cent) and surpasses Asia and the Pacific (28 per cent each) but remains considerably lower than Europe and Central Asia (67 per cent) and the Americas (60 per cent), highlighting a significant difference in the region's commitment to addressing social equity in climate action (See Figure 7). A few examples from the region include;

- Oman's NDC explicitly addresses social equity and justice through socio-economic empowerment programs aimed at enhancing adaptive capacity and ensuring "a decent and sustainable life for all segments of society."
- The UAE's NDC incorporates social inclusion by referencing "zero-discrimination policies" and initiatives such as training and acceleration programs for people of determination, including persons with disabilities. It also highlights social justice, by emphasizing the importance of "ensuring livable conditions for future generations who will be particularly affected by climate change".
- Lebanon's NDC makes a reference to "social justice," aligning with the Secretary-General's 2019 Climate Action Summit declaration, which underscores the importance of managing economic, environmental, and social sustainability transitions in a way that promotes social justice.

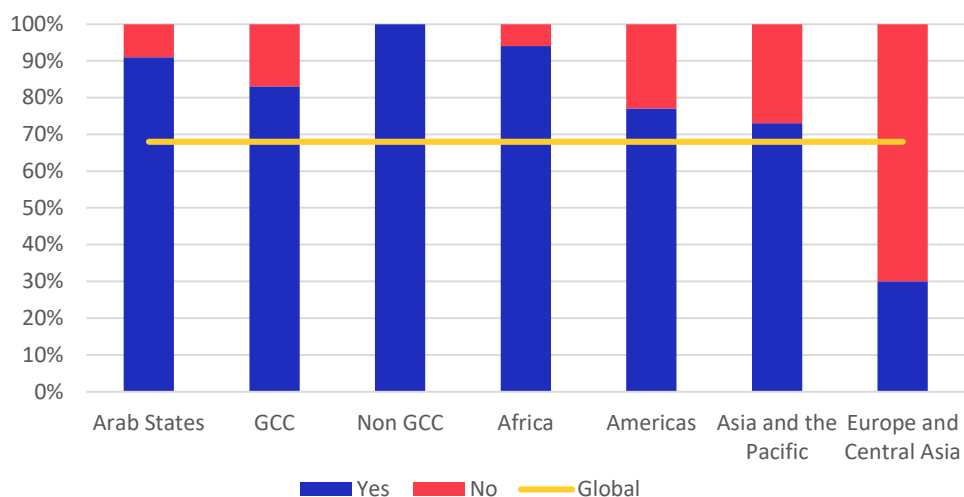
► **Figure 7 Mentions of social inclusion, social equity and related concepts: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC, and global regions**



References to employment in the NDCs

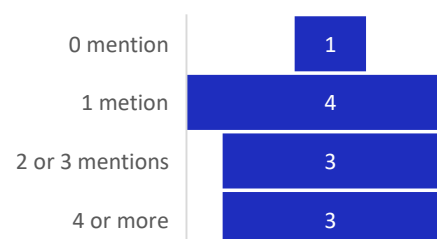
However, the lack of explicit references to just transition does not mean that they do not cover socio-economic issues related to climate change and climate action in the Arab States. In fact, the Arab States region is amongst the regions with the strongest emphasis on **employment** in their climate commitments, surpassing all income categories and the global average (68 per cent). Figure 8 shows the references to employment across regions. Employment-related references appear in 91 per cent of Arab States' NDCs, slightly below Africa (94 per cent), but significantly exceeding the Americas (77 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (73 per cent), and Europe and Central Asia (30 per cent). Interestingly, 5 out of the 6 GCC countries in the region refer to employment, whereas, globally, high-income countries globally tend to focus less on employment in their NDCs. This could be due to importance of the oil and gas sector in the GCC, and the potential job opportunities as well as risk of job losses in the green transition.

► **Figure 8 Employment mentions in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC, and global regions**



While most countries in the region mention employment, the frequency of references varies significantly (See **Error! Reference source not found.**). In four countries (SoP, Bahrain, Iraq, and Kuwait), employment is mentioned only once. Saudi Arabia references employment twice, while Lebanon and Syria mention it three times, reflecting a moderate level of consideration. Lastly, three countries place a notably stronger emphasis on employment, referencing it at least four times. Specifically, the UAE mentions employment six times, Oman nine times, and Jordan stands out with 14 references, underscoring an effort to connect the employment and climate action. Therefore, there is great opportunities for other countries in the region to learn from Jordan, Oman and the UAE when it comes to deepening the focus on employment creation in the NDCs.

► **Figure 9 Frequency of employment references in Arab States' NDCs**



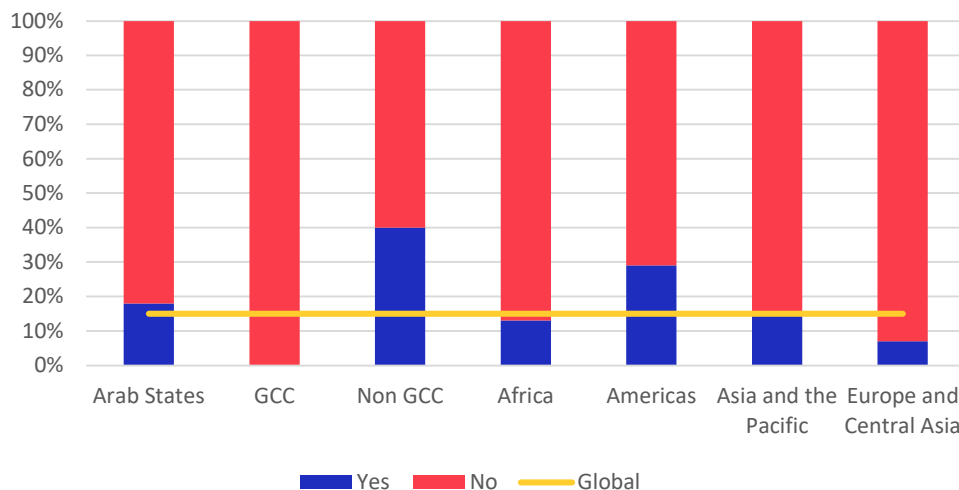
Most references to employment in Arab States' NDCs are general in nature, often appearing in the context of broader economic development or sectoral transformation efforts. For instance:

- **Bahrain's** NDC makes a brief reference to employment: "Initiatives aimed at increasing foreign and local investments to create job opportunities. Many initiatives have already been implemented such as a new tourism strategy, new measures to streamline visa procedures, new legislation to encourage foreign investors, [...]"
- **Kuwait's** NDC links the GHG emissions reduction target to the socio-economic effects of such plans, specifically stating "Also taking into consideration the state's responsibility to provide employment opportunities, housing and to maintain the citizen's living standard, the contribution of the State of Kuwait determined at the national level to avoid the equivalent of 7.4 per cent of its emissions on 2035 is considered very ambitious and fair."
- **Syria's** NDC ties employment to rural development and poverty alleviation, with a focus on preventing rural depopulation to cities for example as seen in the following quotes; "Supporting the creation of job opportunities and combating poverty in the Badia region by promoting small to medium-sized local enterprises, encouraging rural, manual, traditional, and food industries, and preventing the depletion of natural resources" and "Securing opportunities for developing areas outside of cities to reduce migration from rural to urban areas by providing appropriate work, means for a dignified living, and housing".
- **Jordan** has the most frequent references to employment. Notable examples include how the NDC also refer to job creation as a co-benefit, and employment both in terms of mitigation and adaptation efforts. Furthermore the NDC refer to employment creation as a priority to the country. Lastly, the NDC propose a specific process and methodology by establishing a green jobs council or a similar body. A few direct quotes as examples include;
 - "Therefore implementing the current NDC will not only reduce the national greenhouse gases, but will also ensure the essential cross cutting themes of the sustainable development pathway of the country such as, poverty reduction, employment creation, gender equality, women empowerment, and youth inclusion with the climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives. "
 - "With a huge increase of unemployment among Jordanian youth and refugees the main priority for the economy is to generate new jobs. Linking NDC implementation with creating new green jobs will empower NDC implementation to serve national economic and social priorities along with addressing global climate responsibilities."
 - "There is a need to streamline the process of creating and sustaining high skill green jobs. Establishment of a green jobs council or similar body, with a strong representation of private sector and key public sector stakeholders could be explored. This could lead demand-side and supply-side assessments to identify gaps in Jordanian ecosystem in terms of green technology and green entrepreneurship skills; supporting and coordinating private sector-led green technology skills' development and national awareness activities"
- **Palestine's** NDC, rather than emphasizing green job opportunities, highlights the negative impact of climate change on employment: "A substantial reduction in food production, which would have negative impacts on the income and employment of Palestinians working along the agricultural value chain, leading to vulnerable parts of society suffering significant losses to their livelihoods."

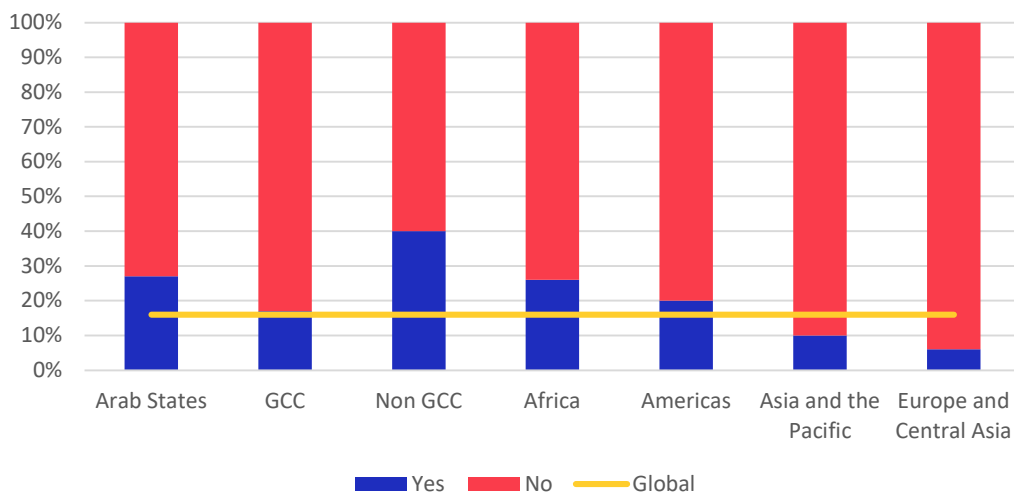
While employment is relatively well acknowledged in Arab States' NDCs, the region includes relatively fewer references to **decent work** (18 per cent) and **green jobs specifically** (27 per cent). That said, the references to

green jobs are more frequent in Arab States than the global average (16 per cent), primarily due to multiple mentions in non-GCC countries rather than a region-wide trend. Yet, it does reflect a reflecting a focus on employment creation and the potential in new green jobs. Figure 10 and Figure 11 reveal a big difference between the GCC and non-GCC Arab states in both decent work and green jobs. The gap between GCC (17 per cent) and non-GCC (40 per cent) suggests varying levels of integration of green job creation in national commitments. Strengthening the uptake of green jobs in NDC commitments can support economic diversification and sustainable job creation region-wide and help balance economic and environmental objectives. The few references of decent work in the GCC (0 per cent) compared to the non-GCC Arab states (40 per cent, 2 out of 5 countries) could indicate a blind spot in terms of the decent work deficits.

► **Figure 10 Decent work mentions in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC, and global regions**



► **Figure 11 Green jobs mentions in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC, and global regions**



The concept of green jobs is explicitly highlighted in some of the NDCs, particularly in non-GCC countries, where the link between employment and climate action is stronger:

- **Oman's** NDC underscores green jobs as part of economic diversification, specifically in renewable energy and methane reduction in the oil and gas sector: "[...] diversifying the economy through innovation and the adoption of advanced technologies promotes economic growth and positions Oman as a pioneer in sustainable development. Initiatives such as renewable energy promotion and methane avoidance in the Oil & Gas sector, create new business opportunities and green jobs in Oman".
- **Iraq's** NDC emphasizes: "The need to identify the types of capacities that need to be built to ensure effective national mitigation actions in providing green jobs."

► **Jordan's** NDC refers to green jobs, as well as being the only in the region to directly mention unemployed groups as a target population, linking climate action to job creation: "With a huge increase of unemployment among Jordanian youth and refugees, the main priority for the economy is to generate new jobs. Linking NDC implementation with creating new green jobs will empower NDC implementation to serve national economic and social priorities." Additionally, Jordan's NDC highlights the role of the private sector in supporting green employment, advocating for policies that foster high-skill green jobs, circular economy initiatives, and green infrastructure development with a focus on inclusivity for marginalized groups.

3.2 Integration of the 9 Just Transition Policy Areas in Arab States' countries' NDCs

This subsection focuses on the inclusion of the 9 policy areas outlined in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines. It should be noted that references to elements of policy areas does not necessarily mean that the NDCs articulate specific actions or ways in which they will be reflected in NDC implementation, nor that it is in relation to just transition plans. Table 4 provides a country-level overview of the inclusion of these nine policy areas, while and Figure 8 illustrates the regional and global trends for comparison.

► **Table 4 Snapshot of just transition policy area inclusion in Arab states' NDCs**

	Enterprise policies	Skills development	OSH	Social protection	ALMPs	Rights	Social dialogue and tripartism	Macro-economic and growth	Industrial and sectoral policies
GCC Countries									
Bahrain									
Kuwait									
Oman		^a							
Qatar									
UAE									
KSA									
Non-GCC Countries									
Iraq									
Jordan									
Lebanon									
Palestine									
Syria									
<i>Yemen^b</i>									

Notes: Yellow shading in the table indicates that the respective policy area is included in the country's NDC. Lighter cells signify that the policy area is not explicitly referenced.

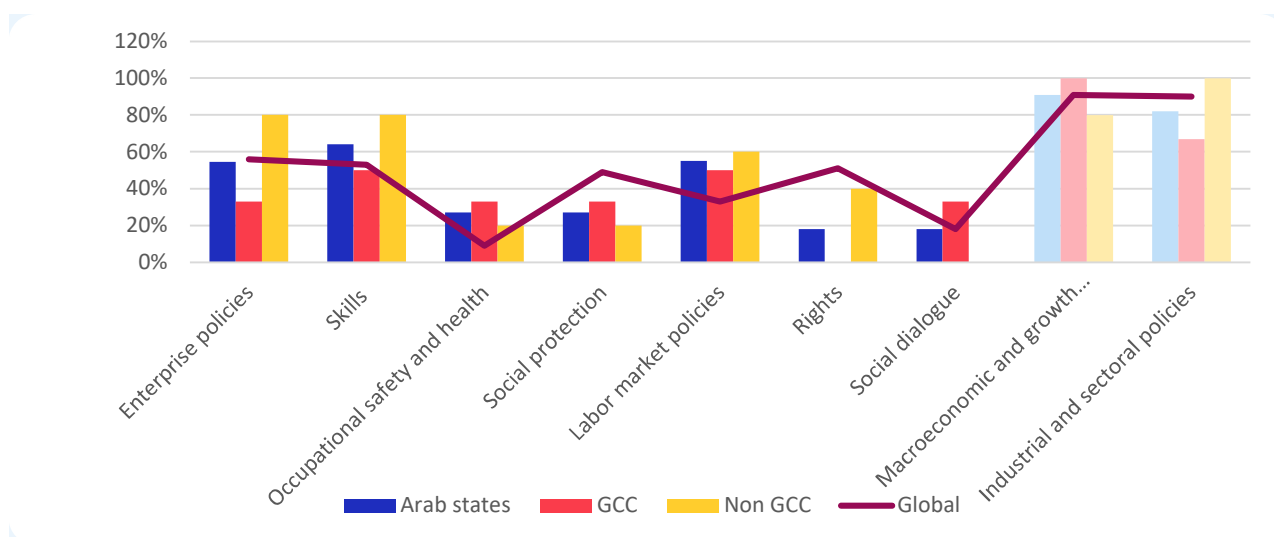
^a While the database and the global report indicate that Oman's NDC does not reference skills development, our review and data verification confirmed that it does explicitly mention this policy area. As a result, our analysis reflects 64 per cent for Arab States, compared to 55 per cent in the global report.

^b While Yemen is shaded in the table like other countries based on a review of its I-NDC, it is not considered in the global and regional analysis and is therefore excluded from regional averages including in Figure 12.

Macroeconomic and growth policies (91 per cent) and **industrial and sectoral policies** (82 per cent) are the most frequently integrated just transition areas in the NDCs of Arab States, aligning with global averages of 91 per cent and 90 per cent, respectively. This suggests that Arab governments are prioritizing broader economic and industrial transformations as part of their climate strategies. However, policies tend not to be explicitly linked to just transition or if they primarily address broader climate and economic objectives without direct consideration of employment and social impacts. For instance, references to taxation or economic incentives in NDCs may aim to stimulate investment in climate-related sectors but do not to promote a just transition. This broader interpretation contributes to the consistently high inclusion rates of macroeconomic and industrial policies across all income groups and regions (ILO, 2024b).

Another area with relatively strong inclusion is **skills development** (64 per cent)⁶, which exceeds the global average of 53 per cent. This reflects a recognition of the need to prepare the workforce for the transition to a green economy. Similarly, **active labor market policies** (55 per cent) surpass the global average of 33 per cent. **Enterprise policies** (55 per cent) are also relatively well represented in the region, closely aligning with the global level (56 per cent). Thereby, the Arab States is mostly in line with global averages on the uptake of these policy areas. Meanwhile, the inclusion of **occupational safety and health** (OSH) (27 per cent) is significantly higher than the global average of 9 per cent, which may reflect regional concerns over extreme heat, climate-induced health risks, and workplace safetyj

► **Figure 12 Mentions of just transition policy areas in the Arab States**



However, when it comes to the policy areas of **social protection** (27 per cent) and **rights** (18 per cent), these are significantly underrepresented in the NDCs of Arab States, falling well below the global averages of 50 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively. The limited attention to social protection is particularly notable, given its critical role in cushioning the social and labour market impacts of climate policies and possible negative impact of decarbonization plans. On the other hand, **social dialogue and tripartism** are mentioned in 18 per cent of NDCs—on par with the global average— however, this is due to the references to stakeholder consultations. The analysis and mapping suggests that social partners have not been consulted previously in the NDC development in the Arab States region, leaving the opportunity for stronger social dialogue and stakeholder consultations in the next round of NDCs.

An analysis of GCC and non-GCC countries reveals interesting differences in the integration of just transition policy areas. Enterprise policies and skills development are more frequently included in non-GCC countries, while social dialogue and tripartism (i.e. stakeholder consultation) appear only in GCC NDCs (Qatar and UAE). Conversely,

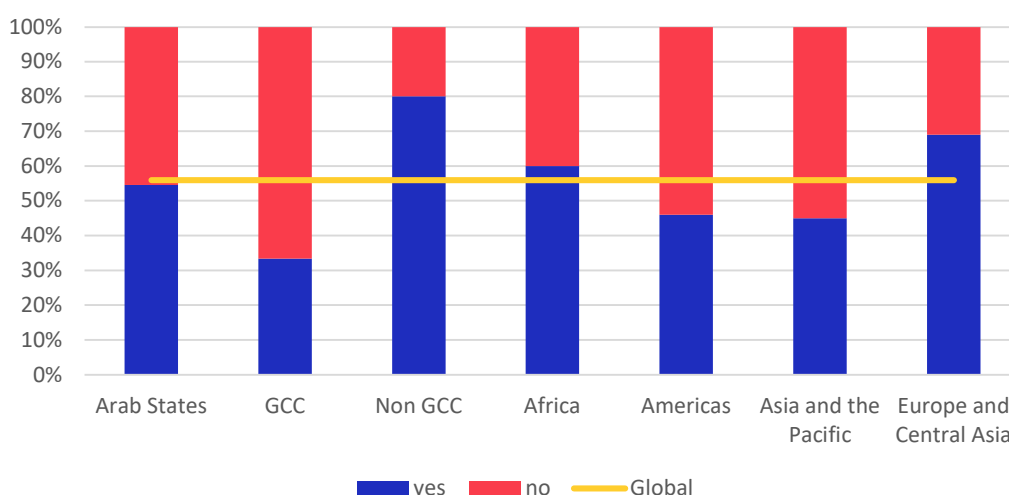
references to labor rights are found exclusively in non-GCC countries (Jordan and Lebanon). Additionally, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar do not reference any key social policies.

The sections below dive deeper into the policy areas of enterprise policies, skills development, occupational safety and health (OSH), and social protection, evaluating their prevalence across GCC and non-GCC countries while benchmarking them against global trends. Additionally, it explores the types of measures referenced, providing examples and inspiration for other countries.

3.2.1 Enterprise policies

Enterprise policies play a critical role in facilitating a just transition by ensuring that businesses, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy (SSE) entities, and entrepreneurs, are not left behind in the transition. A well-designed enterprise policy framework supports economic resilience, decent job creation, and compliance with environmental standards while fostering green innovation and entrepreneurship. By integrating enterprise policies into NDCs, governments can ensure that businesses receive the necessary support to transition and remain competitive, and also encourage the development of businesses in new and emerging low-carbon sectors that contribute to a greener economy while generating more and better jobs. References to enterprise policy elements might include support measures for businesses, such as an enabling environment for sustainable enterprise development, productivity growth and innovation, pay special attention to assisting MSMEs, cooperatives and other SSE entities and entrepreneurs, in making the transition. Figure 13 shows the extent to which Arab States incorporate enterprise policies into their NDCs and how their approach compares to global trends.

► **Figure 13 Enterprise policy elements mentions in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC and global regions**



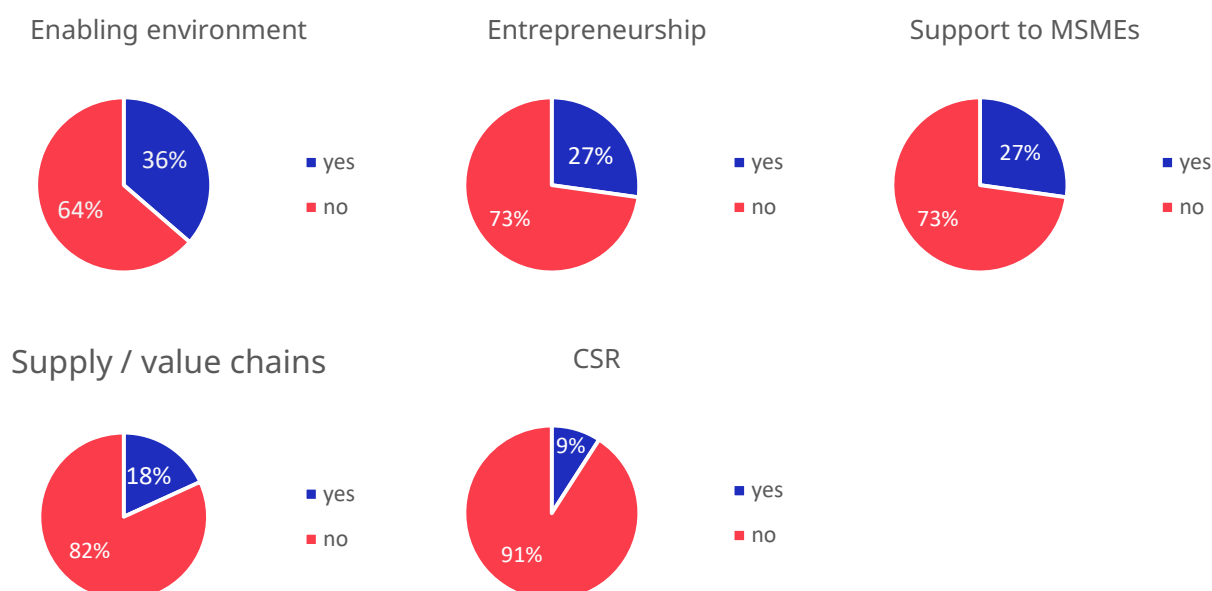
Overall, 55 per cent of NDCs include references to enterprise policies, aligning closely with the global average of 56 per cent. In general, enterprise policies are more frequently mentioned by non-GCC countries (80 percent), than by countries in the Gulf (33 per cent). This suggests that non-GCC Arab States place a stronger emphasis on supporting sustainable enterprise development, MSMEs, and entrepreneurship. This is surprising, as economic diversification is a common priority by GCC countries.

Oman's second NDC from 2021 provides an example of how economic diversification and co-benefits is highlighted with a specific focus on the enabling environment, finance, and entrepreneurship; *"Oman's commitment to mitigate GHG emissions while driving sustainable growth is evident in its NDC report. This commitment is emphasized by transforming the economy towards innovation, embracing new technologies, and capacity building, seeking comprehensive integration between economic sectors to diversify trade, invest in high-value sectors, and grow the non-oil GDP share. In order to succeed, fostering local innovation, empowering entrepreneurship, and a conducive legislative environment are essential. As a result, Oman's global and regional economic competitiveness will be strengthened, ensuring sustainable and stable growth"*. Other sections of the NDC also highlight specific support for SMEs, including a focus on enhancing financial support which often tends to be a particular barrier for smaller enterprises when transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

Figure 14 shows the types of enterprise policy elements. Among the NDCs from the Arab States region, 36 per cent reference **enabling environments**, exceeding the global average of 32 per cent, signalling the region's focus on foundational measures for enterprise development. In contrast, support to **MSMEs and entrepreneurship** are each mentioned in only 27 per cent of cases, falling short of the global averages of 49 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively. Particular attention to MSMEs and entrepreneurship is relevant to support smaller businesses that may not have the internal or inhouse capacity to advance the transition. Supply and value chains are less frequently mentioned, at 18 per cent, compared to the global rate of 28 per cent, indicating a gap in efforts to strengthen economic linkages and integration. **Jordan** is one of the two countries to refer to supply chains, with regards to water and agriculture co-benefits throughout the supply chain, and highlight specific job creation opportunities through waste water treatment. The other reference is found in the NDC by the **State of Palestine**, specifically with regards to agriculture, post-harvest, and climate-smart production.

Compared to global averages, **CSR** concepts are only mentioned in the case of Jordan's NDC, however, percentage-wise this still represent twice as much as the global average of 4 per cent. In the case of Jordan, the CSR references is related to green infrastructure measures, especially linked to biodiversity adaptation activities. The low uptake of CSR and related terminology may be due to lack of awareness, as some of the NDCs do refer to the role of the private sector in the transition.

► **Figure 14 Mentions of types of enterprise policy elements in Arab States' NDCs**



3.2.2 Skills development

As economies transition to more sustainable business models, equipping workers with the right skills is essential for workforce adaptability, minimizing job displacement, and creating new opportunities in green sectors. A diverse skill set is required to enable workers to thrive in a low-carbon economy. This includes foundational, technical (hard), and core (soft) skills, with an emphasis on STEM competencies. Education and training initiatives should be targeted, inclusive, and responsive to sectoral needs, prioritizing vulnerable groups. Expanding digital learning, apprenticeships, and financial support for training can further broaden access to green skills development.

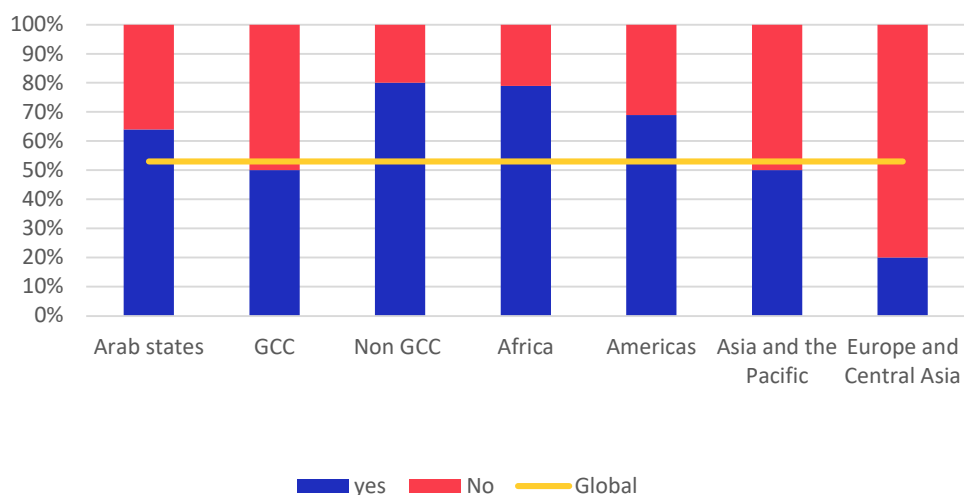
Moreover, strong policy coordination, social dialogue, and partnerships between governments, social partners, and training institutions are essential for ensuring an inclusive and effective skills transition. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) and collaborative peer-learning initiatives, particularly for MSMEs, can drive sustainable skills development and long-term labour market transformation.

To achieve this, education, training, and lifelong learning systems must be aligned with climate objectives and labour market demands. Institutionalized mechanisms for identifying and anticipating skills needs for green jobs, supported by robust labour market data and workforce planning, can enhance the match between skills supply and demand, improving the relevance of training for green jobs. Mainstreaming green skills into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and lifelong learning systems further strengthens workforce resilience

and adaptability. Bridging skills gaps is essential for a just transition, thus the imperative for countries to include skills development concerns in their NDCs.

Figure 15 illustrates the extent to which Arab States integrate skills development into their NDCs, comparing regional trends with global patterns and exploring the specific types of skills-related measures included in climate commitments.

► **Figure 15 Skills development mentions in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC, and global regions**



Skills development policy measures are included in 64 per cent⁷ of NDCs in Arab States, above the global average of 53 per cent. However, there is a notable disparity within the region: 80 per cent of non-GCC Arab States address skills development in their NDCs, significantly higher than the 50 per cent of GCC countries, highlighting a stronger focus on workforce development outside the GCC.

Only five countries in the Arab States specify **sectors**, with regards to their skills development policy measures. In the Arab States' seven different sectors are mentioned with regards to skills development. The most frequent sectors are **energy, agriculture** and **health** (mentioned by 2 countries). Globally, 44 per cent of NDCs mention agriculture, and 21 per cent refer to the health care sector. Renewable energy and energy efficiency, which are key to decarbonization, are mentioned by 21 percent and 13 per cent, respectively, of NDCs globally. Additionally, while sectors such as water and **waste management** are commonly addressed in global NDCs (15 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively), they are not linked to any skills initiatives in the Arab States' NDCs reviewed. The inclusion of **digital, data, and AI** highlights a forward-looking approach in the region, though only the UAE included the aspect of the digital economy in their skills development considerations. The low number of targeted mentions across sectors suggests that many skills development policies in Arab States may be framed in a cross-sectoral manner rather than being explicitly tied to specific industries.

As an example, **Jordan** outlines a suggested process on how to address the skills gap as well as referring to specific green technologies: *"There is a need to streamline the process of creating and sustaining high skill green jobs. Establishment of a green jobs council or similar body, with a strong representation of private sector and key public sector stakeholders could be explored. This could lead demand-side and supply-side assessments to identify gaps in Jordanian ecosystem in terms of green technology and green entrepreneurship skills; supporting and coordinating private sector-led green technology skills' development and national awareness activities"*

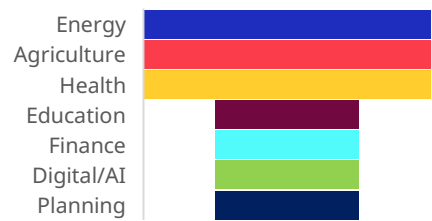
Another example includes the **UAE** that refer to regulation as a way to spread awareness: *"Utilities and regulatory bodies are driving a further shift in energy consumption behavior through education and awareness programs. Standards and labels being a proven enabler of demand management and informed consumer choices, UAE has an established*

⁷ The percentage difference from the global report arises from the inclusion of a reference to skills development in Oman's NDC. Our review and data verification confirmed that Oman's NDC explicitly mentions skills development, whereas the global report erroneously excluded it. As a result, our analysis reflects 64 per cent for Arab States (7/11), while the global report indicates 55 per cent (6/11) due to this discrepancy.

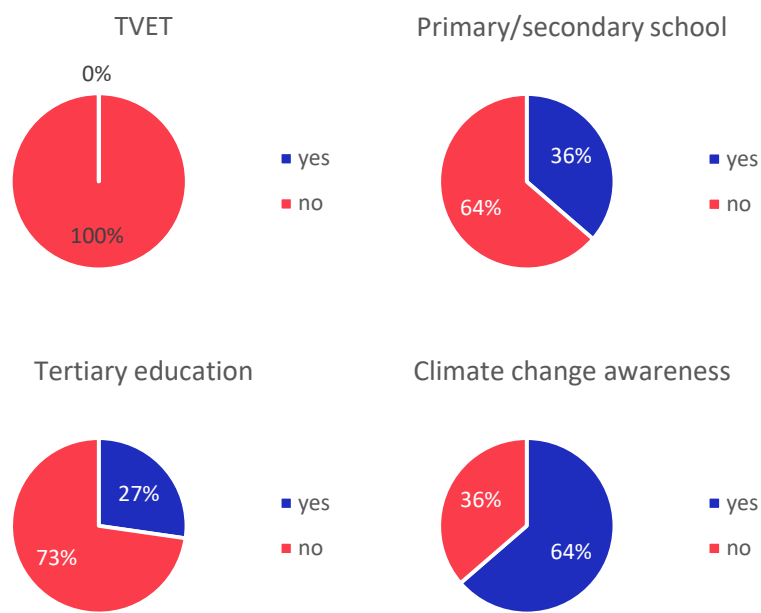
Energy Efficiency Standardization and Labeling Program which covers a range of household goods and appliances including washing machines and dryers, household refrigerators, water heaters, lighting appliances and air conditioners.”

Figure 17 shows the **types of education and training programs** mentioned in Arab States’ NDCs, revealing notable trends and gaps. Strikingly, none of NDCs reference **technical and vocational education and training(TVET)**, indicating a complete lack of emphasis on specialized vocational training for green jobs, despite TVET being widely recognized as a critical skills set needed for the workforce during the transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies. In contrast, 36 per cent of NDCs include policies addressing climate-related education **in primary and secondary schooling**, significantly exceeding the global rate of 19 per cent, reflecting a strong regional focus on integrating **climate awareness** into early education, while 27 per cent reference **tertiary education**, surpassing the global rate of 17 per cent, underscoring the region’s emphasis on higher education’s role in climate action. Additionally, 64 per cent of Arab States’ NDCs incorporate measures aimed at enhancing **public awareness** and knowledge about climate change, slightly below the global average of 77 per cent. These findings suggest that Arab States prioritize formal education and awareness-raising but fail to recognize TVET as an essential mechanism for equipping workers with the practical skills needed for green jobs, leaving a critical gap in workforce preparedness.

► **Figure 16 Number of NDCs specifying sectors in skills development policies in Arab States’ NDC**



► **Figure 17 Mentions of types of education and training programs in Arab States’ NDCs**



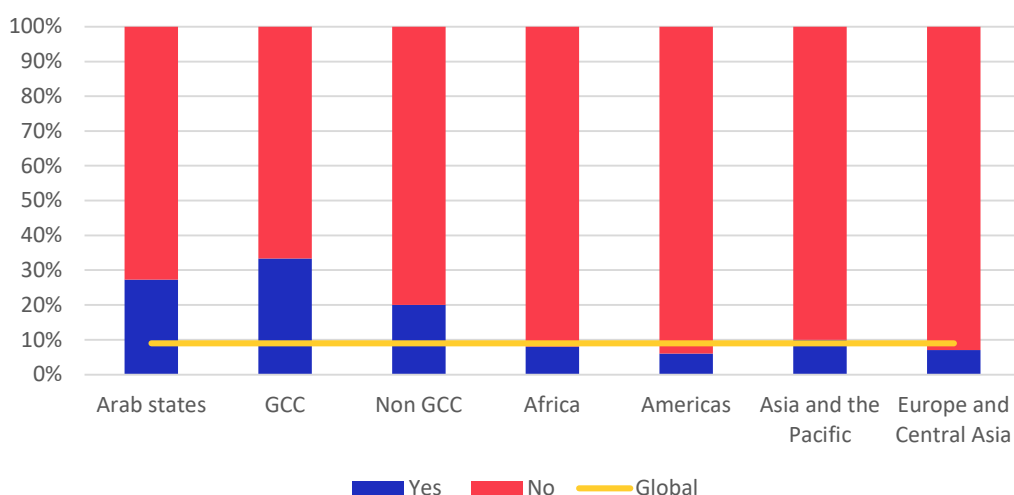
3.2.3 Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is a fundamental labour right and one of the nine policy areas of the just transition guidelines, ensuring that workers are protected from both climate-related risks and the hazards associated with new green technologies and work processes. Occupational safety and health (OSH) policies and measures may be deployed to tackle safety and health risks for workers due to climate change impacts such as rising temperatures or to protect the safety and health of workers in emerging green industries or those using green technologies and inputs. OSH policy elements can relate to adapting or developing new OSH standards for new work processes in green industries, references to the promotion or enforcement of existing OSH standards, and OSH training and awareness raising.

Climate adaptation strategies must integrate OSH considerations to ensure that all jobs in the green economy are not only sustainable but also safe. Governments, in consultation with social partners, should anticipate and mitigate OSH risks through regulatory frameworks, workplace safety standards, and targeted worker training. Risk assessments should account for emerging threats associated with new materials, processes, and industries, ensuring that the shift toward greener economies does not come at the expense of worker safety.

Figure 18 shows how Arab States integrate OSH considerations into their NDCs, assessing the extent to which occupational risks are addressed and comparing regional trends with global patterns.

► **Figure 18 Mentions of Occupational safety and health terms in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC and global regions**



Occupational safety and health (OSH) policies are included in 27 per cent of NDCs from Arab States (3 out of 11 countries), significantly exceeding the global average of 9 per cent. Within the region, GCC countries lead with 33 per cent (2 out of 6 countries), higher than Non-GCC countries at 20 per cent (1 out of 5 countries), highlighting a relatively balanced but still modest focus on OSH measures across the region. As an example, the **UAE's** highlights OSH concerns, particularly regarding heat stress, a critical issue given the country's extreme weather conditions. It notes that a ministerial decree mandates employers to provide outdoor workers with breaks during peak summer hours to prevent heat-related illnesses, illustrating a targeted policy measure addressing climate-induced occupational risks.

As an example, the **Oman** NDC refers to the risk related to global warming and rising temperatures, "*the temperature increase will also significantly impact human health and well-being, particularly for vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, and people with existing health conditions. The temperature rise will also exacerbate existing problems, such as air pollution, and increase the risk of heat-related illnesses*".

Similarly, the **UAE** the NDC frequently refers to health issues, including the reduction of pollutants, and how climate change adaptation will reduce climate risks related to "*loss of life, health, livelihoods, and assets*". It furthermore links extreme heat directly to the conditions at work; "*According to the national climate risk assessment undertaken by the UAE, reduced productivity of outdoor workers due to heat stress is a high-magnitude, highly likely impact that the UAE will face, with morbidity and/or mortality from heat stroke following close behind. Given the temperatures and humidity levels that characterize the desert climate of the country, heat stress is a concern that public health authorities are already grappling with.*"

While heat stress, air pollution, and health is integrated in some of the NDCs, other climate related OSH risks are yet uncovered such as UV radiation. It is also not always, that health related references link to occupational risks, and the need for further awareness raising and research on climate related OSH risks is needed.

3.2.4 Social protection and other support to low-income households

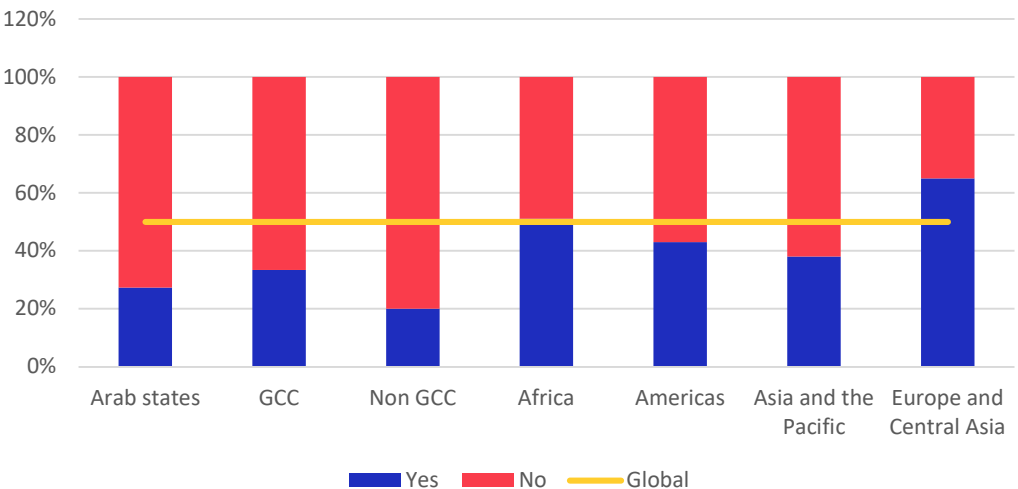
Social protection plays a central role in preventing and addressing the adverse consequences of climate crisis and enabling a just transition. It reduces vulnerability and increases resilience of people and economies, contributes to raising adaptive capacities and is key for compensating and cushioning households, workers and enterprises from potential adverse impacts of mitigation and other environmental policies.

Social protection systems are vital for enabling a low-carbon transition, addressing job losses in for example fossil fuel sectors, managing energy subsidy reforms, the greening of pension funds (e.g. divestment from carbon-intensive investment portfolios), and supporting the creation of green jobs with access to social protection system. This includes measures such as unemployment protection (e.g. providing income support to those losing their jobs due to climate-related hazards or transition policies across sectors), employment injury support (e.g. providing income replacement for occupational heat-related illnesses and injuries), retirement schemes, and general income support (i.e., social assistance) widely referred to as cash transfers. Strengthening these systems across the Arab States, is essential for fostering equitable resilience and ensuring a just transition in the region, among other things.

Active labour market policies, such as public works programmes, can help reorient labour toward environmentally sustainable activities whilst generating income earning opportunities. While public works schemes have not always been human-centred or rights-based, well-designed programmes could play an important complementary role to social protection's function. Public works can mobilize under-employed labour for renewable energy projects, public transit expansion, regenerative agriculture, and ecological restoration (i.e. rewilding which is an intrinsic public good). Such efforts may include afforestation to reduce flood risks and cool urban areas, initiatives to combat desertification and preserve arable land or efforts to develop or restore natural carbon sinks. These programmes can provide short-term income opportunities while supporting climate adaptation and to a lesser extent mitigation, though they are not substitutes for formal, long-term employment as they do not provide the income support or income replacement function synonymous with social protection instruments. Globally, several types of social protection policies are mentioned in NDCs. Social protection policies such as unemployment benefits, old-age pensions (contributory or tax-financed social pensions as a voluntary retirement measure for workers close to retirement age in industries undergoing major structural changes), benefits for pregnant women, social safety nets⁸ and cash transfers, are mentioned in 16 NDCs globally (8 per cent of the NDCs). Complementary policies such as public work programme or employment guarantee schemes are mentioned in 11 NDCs (6 per cent). Social services are mentioned in 21 NDCs (11 per cent), support to displaced population in 3 NDCs (2 per cent), and other support to low-income households (mostly compensation for the costs of clean energy transition) are included in 69 NDCs (36 per cent).

Figure 19 illustrates the inclusion of social protection measures in NDCs across different regions. It is important to note that the percentages do not solely reflect social protection policies but also other support mechanisms, including public work programs, employment guarantee schemes, social services, assistance for displaced populations, and compensation measures for low-income households affected by the clean energy transition (ILO, 2024b). This broader categorization follows the methodology outlined in the global dataset and analysis, which considers any reference to these forms of support as part of the social protection framework in NDCs (See Appendix A).

► **Figure 19 Mentions of social protection and related terms in NDCs: Arab States, GCC, Non-GCC, and global regions**



⁸ Social safety nets refer to a subset of social assistance within non-contributory provision that forms part of a wider more comprehensive social protection system promoted by the ILO.

The Arab States' inclusion rate of social protection (27 per cent) in NDCs is significantly lower than the global average (50 per cent) and regions such as Europe and Central Asia (65 per cent) and Africa (51 per cent). Social protection plays a dual role in addressing climate challenges: it provides adaptive or shock-responsive support to vulnerable populations before, during, and after climate crises, strengthening household and businesses resilience, delivering assistance during shocks, and facilitating recovery to pre-crisis levels. It also has a lesser explored role to play in mitigation through the way pension funds are invested/divested, and also potentially the facilitation of sectoral change of workers to greener work.

In **Oman**, social protection is identified as a national priority, although the NDC provides no further elaboration on its components or implementation mechanisms. The reference remains general and does not outline how social protection will mitigate the socio-economic impacts of climate policies.

The **UAE** presents a more detailed approach, integrating social protection measures through enhanced social services—notably housing, road infrastructure, and walkability—as part of broader well-being objectives. The NDC also includes public works and employment guarantee schemes linked to the country's Net Zero Strategy, which aims to generate an average of 160,000 jobs annually from 2025 to 2050.

Jordan offers one of the most substantive examples of integrating social protection into its climate commitments. The NDC includes targeted support for low-income households, including investment in small ruminant farming for poor rural families, and highlights the role of housing and emergency aid. It further acknowledges the need to align social protection with climate adaptation by stating: *"Integrating climate adaptation into national poverty reduction policies and improving the existing social protection system to cope with climate change consequences and serve Jordanian segments of society..."*

While **Lebanon** does not formally reference social protection in its NDC, it does mention the establishment of a public insurance system for environmental disasters, suggesting partial awareness of the need for risk mitigation mechanisms, albeit outside the formal social protection framework.

Overall, the limited and uneven integration of social protection in Arab States' NDCs reflects a missed opportunity to harness its full potential as a tool for building resilience and managing the socioeconomic impacts of climate change. Without stronger inclusion, the region risks leaving vulnerable populations without adequate support during the transition to a low-carbon economy.

► Conclusions and Policy recommendations

4.1 Summary regional just transition trends and key take-aways

This regional review of the NDCs across the Arab States' countries take stock of the uptake of various just transition policy elements. The depth and breadth of the NDCs varies, with the shortest at 10 pages (Bahrain) and the longest at 77 pages (Jordan). 11 out of 12 countries in the Arab States region have submitted their NDCs, with Yemen having submitted an intended-NDC (as they have not ratified the Paris Agreement). The study found, that **three out of 11 the Arab Countries NDCs make explicit references to just transition** (UAE, Lebanon and the State of Palestine). However, the NDCs in the region have captured various other dimensions of the just transition agenda. For example, the region shows strong emphasis on employment, with 91 per cent of NDCs mentioning job creation – one of the highest rates globally. In particular, non-GCC country NDCs reflect greater inclusion of social and labour-related policy areas such as skills development and enterprise policies, while GCC countries tend to have shorter NDCs and to prioritize the enterprise development, economic diversification and energy transition strategies. Not surprisingly, there is a strong link between the length of the NDC and how many just transition policy areas are covered, and NDCs with low to no inclusion of just transition policy areas tend to be shorter than 20 pages long. Although references to “green jobs” and “decent work” remain limited, there are good examples in the region, recognising that climate action and employment policies must move hand in hand to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

In summary, the this regional review found:

► Few explicit references to just transition

Only three Arab States (27 per cent), the UAE, Lebanon, and the State of Palestine, explicitly reference “just transition” in their NDCs. Notably, Oman, which previously included five references to just transition in its 2021 NDC, omitted them entirely in its 2023 update, and rather refer to an Orderly Transition.

The lack of just transition references is particularly significant given that more than half of the Arab States assessed are high-income GCC countries, among which only the UAE references just transition, despite a global trend where 62 per cent of high-income countries include such references. Furthermore, none of the Arab NDCs contain dedicated sections on just transition, nor do they establish concrete institutional arrangements, follow-up strategies, or partnerships for implementation. The lack of concrete just transition measures may present challenges when it comes to NDC and just transition implementation.

► Employment creation is a recurrent theme

Employment is one of the most frequently mentioned themes in Arab States' NDCs, appearing in 91 per cent of submissions, exceeding both the global average and most regional averages (only exceeded by the African regional average of 94 per cent). This suggests that governments recognize the labour market implications of climate change and climate action. However, the depth and detail of engagement varies widely. While countries like Jordan, Oman, and the UAE offer more elaborate labour-related sections, others provide only minimal references.

Critically, references to “decent work” and “green jobs” remain limited across the region (18 per cent and 27 per cent respectively), suggesting that employment quality and alignment with climate objectives are not yet central pillars of national climate strategies. Employment is frequently addressed in general terms, such as job creation or labour market impacts, without linking to quality of work, income security, or worker protections.

► The coverage of just transition policy areas

The integration of the nine ILO just transition policy areas in Arab States' NDCs is fragmented, with some themes mostly omitted, while others are frequently included:

- **Macroeconomic and industrial policies are widely referenced, but not necessarily linked to just transition goals.** Macroeconomic and growth policies as well as industrial and sectoral policies are the most commonly referenced, appearing in 91 per cent and 82 per cent of NDCs, respectively. However, these policies are rarely framed as tools for a just transition. This mirrors global patterns, where such policies are commonly included but tend to support broad economic or environmental objectives without a clear link to employment or social equity considerations.
- **Skills development relatively well integrated, but the absence of TVET is a critical gap.** Skills development is referenced in 64 per cent of Arab NDCs, surpassing the global average (53 per cent) and

with particularly strong inclusion in non-GCC countries (80 per cent). Yet, none of the NDCs reference technical and vocational education and training (TVET), a critical gap given the widely recognized role of TVET in equipping workers with sector-specific, practical skills essential for the green transition. Skills interventions mentioned in the NDCs tend to be economy wide, rather than sector specific.

- **Arab States lead globally in referencing active labour market policies (ALMPs).** ALMPs are included in 55 per cent of Arab States' NDCs – the highest regional rate globally, highlighting a recognition of the need to support workers and enterprises in adapting to green economy demands.
- **Above-average references to occupational safety and health (OSH), but limited integration.** These measures are referenced in 27 per cent of NDCs – three times the global average, with GCC countries slightly ahead. Some of the references are to health more broadly such as heat stress and pollution, though some of the NDCs refer to occupational risks, such as the UAE focus on outdoor workers.
- **Enterprise development is often mentioned, though with little detail.** Enterprise policies are mentioned in 55 per cent of Arab NDCs, on par with global average, but the depth and coverage remain limited. While enabling environments receive some attention, key areas such as support for MSMEs, entrepreneurship, and value chains are underrepresented and fall well below global benchmarks. This report includes text examples for inspiration on the inclusion of such topics.
- **Social protection is significantly underrepresented** with only 27 per cent of Arab NDCs versus 50 per cent globally. The types of support referenced varies from social services, social protection, public works, public insurance for environmental disasters, and public works and employment guarantee schemes.
- **Social dialogue** is not mentioned in any of the NDCs, though 18 per cent of Arab NDCs do refer to some kind of stakeholder consultations or dialogues. NDC development and revision is receiving growing attention, and future revisions can base itself of a whole-government and whole-of-society approach by consulting with Ministries of Labour and social partners throughout the process.
- **Labour rights** are not mentioned in any of the NDCs in the region. Rights are mentioned in only Jordan and Lebanon (representing 18 per cent of the NDCs) with their references to human rights. This is well below the global average of 51 per cent.

4.2 Looking ahead towards NDC 3.0

The next round of NDCs (to be submitted by 2025) present a new opportunity for countries to raise the level of ambition for climate action as well as further integrating just transition policies. In shaping just transition policy frameworks, there is not a one-size-fit-all approach.

Each country in the Arab States' region, with its unique socio-economic context and climate challenges, requires a strategy tailored to its national circumstances. Designing policy recommendations for the region is a particularly sensitive task given the heterogeneity across these countries, especially when considering the disparities between GCC and non-GCC countries. Therefore, the ILO Just Transition Guidelines must be applied with consideration of national priorities through social dialogue and in line with the just transition principles outlined in the Guidelines. The points below offer a set of suggestions to guide policymakers in designing robust and context-sensitive just transition pathways as part of their NDC 3.0 updates.

1. Keep and strengthen existing just transition policy areas in NDCs, while including new dimensions

To advance more coherent and inclusive climate strategies, Arab States countries should align their just transition efforts with the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, the ILO Just Transition Resolution and Conclusions. This includes making visible and concrete commitments by explicitly referencing just transition in their NDCs, ideally through a dedicated section, and ensuring policy coherence between the climate and employment policies.

The Arab States region is amongst the regions with the greatest inclusion of **employment** related topics in their NDCs. These references can be further strengthened by considering the quality of the jobs and green job creation, specifically. Ensuring that employment effects of both climate policies and climate change itself is key for a just transition. Crucially, this must include systematic measures to support vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, low-income populations, and displaced people, to ensure that the transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies leaves no one behind.

The Arab States region is already including **Occupational Health and Safety** concerns in their NDCs, mostly with relation to heat stress. This leadership position can be further strengthened through including other climate related health risks such as UV radiation or pollution to name a few. The ministry responsible for reviewing the NDC can consult with Ministry of Labour (or similar national employment and labour related entity) to capture all the work, policies, and progress made by the country to foster policy coherence and present a full picture of the country's work and plans on just transition.

While **skills development** is covered in some Arab NDCs, there is a notable absence of references to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Considering the large focus on industrial, sectoral, and growth policies in the countries' NDCs, this gap should be addressed by developing targeted TVET systems aligned with priority sectors, such as renewable energy to avoid future skill mismatches and enhance workforce readiness.

Similarly, **enterprise policies** are mentioned in over half of Arab NDCs, but often lack depth. Enabling environments are discussed, but more targeted support to MSMEs, entrepreneurship, and sustainable value chains is needed to unlock green market potential and create decent work opportunities. Regional engagement with corporate social responsibility suggests some foundation to build on.

Social protection is increasingly being linked to climate change policies, as a way to minimize and carefully manage any unintended consequences of the transition. Countries across the Arab States, could review and adapt their existing social protection systems to ensure they are well equipped and prepared to climate-related shocks and transition risks.

2. Institutional coordination and social dialogue for inclusive and full-picture NDCs

Achieving a just transition requires a **whole-of-society approach**. This calls for the active involvement of all relevant governmental bodies to ensure coherent policies and minimize contradictions and overlaps. While Ministries of Environment and Climate Change typically lead NDC preparation in Arab States, broader engagement of line ministries—especially those responsible for labour, social protection, education, and economic planning—is essential to align climate commitments with employment and social equity goals.

As per the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, **social dialogue** is one of the guiding principles of a just transition. While some countries mention stakeholder engagements or consultations, social partners remain largely left out of the NDC development and revision processes, despite their critical role in shaping labour market policies and anticipating sectoral transformations. As mentioned in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, "Adequate, informed and ongoing consultations should take with all relevant stakeholders", in particular workers' and employers' organisations.

To ensure that climate strategies are grounded in real-world labour dynamics and enjoy broad support, Arab States' countries could establish institutionalize tripartite dialogue by mandating the systematic involvement of workers', employers', and civil society organizations in the design, review, and implementation of NDCs. This could help ensure these actors are not only consulted, but also actively involved in policy planning and follow-up mechanisms. Including the World of Work actors in NDC development can ensure the depth and breadth of the NDC, and especially assist with the implementation of the NDC plans after submission.

3. Capacity development, awareness raising, and regional networks

Building the knowledge and capacity amongst policy makers and social partners in the Arab States' region is key to foster policy coherence and further engagement between the World of Work and the World of Climate and Environmental action. The change makers in the climate space, may not be aware of the social dimensions of climate change, in the same way that the World of Work actors may not be aware of how climate change policies or climate change impacts jobs and livelihoods. Bridging this gap to foster further policy coherence will be essential.

The countries across the region faces unique challenges, but there is potential for regional cooperation to shape climate response and just transition efforts. Key aspects include enhancing collaboration through regional networks, sharing knowledge and expertise to benefit from economies of scale, and developing joint strategies to address climate risks like desertification, mangrove restoration, reforestation, afforestation, water scarcity, and extreme weather events.

Governments can continue their efforts to emphasize climate action urgency through supporting further research and data collection, regular awareness campaigns, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities of a low-carbon economy. This ensures public support and proactive engagement in the transition. Additionally, establishing

an extensive online database consolidating all climate action policies by country, theme, sector, type, and status can be beneficial.

4. Sustainable funding mechanisms for the implementation of the framework

None of the NDCs in the region refer to just transition financing plans, however leveraging private sector finance can further accelerate the green transition. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) present a collaborative model where governments provide initial funding and guarantees, while the private sector offers expertise and efficiency. Instruments such as sovereign green bonds or sharia-compliant green sukuk can widen financing avenues. For example the ILO Just Transition Guidelines state how governments should “promote close collaboration between relevant national ministries, including ministries of economic planning and finance, with a view to establishing policies and programmes that can adapt to changes in the fiscal and political landscape”.

Fiscal reforms should continue to support vulnerable groups, and measures like eliminating energy subsidies can promote sustainable consumption and reduce emissions. Non-GCC countries need to collaborate with international organizations and development banks, utilizing funds like the Clean Technology Fund (CTF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), and Global Environment Facility (GEF), which mostly finance Morocco and Egypt (UN ESCWA, 2022; UNFCCC, n.d.c). Accredited access to climate funds could benefit non-GCC Arab states.

Collective financing can support regional climate initiatives. Establishing a regional just transition fund similar to the EU’s Just Transition Fund (JTF) or could offer targeted support to regions most impacted by the green economy shift. Existing regional initiatives, such as the Middle East Green Initiative, can also integrate just transition concerns by accounting for the socio-economic dimensions through their projects.

► Appendices

Appendix A Note on coding instructions for the analysis of social protection and other support to low-income households

To identify references to social protection policies and other support to low-income households in NDCs, the coding instructions used in this analysis included the following categories:

- 1) Social protection, including unemployment benefits; old-age pensions (contributory or tax-financed), social pensions (as a voluntary measure for workers close to retirement age in industries undergoing major structural changes); social safety nets; benefits for pregnant women; cash transfers;
- 2) Public work programmes and employment guarantee schemes;
- 3) Social services (in-kind benefits that complement cash benefits listed above, both considered part of a social protection floor as per the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation No.202);
- 4) Support to displaced populations;
- 5) Other support for low-income households (considering compensation for low-income households heavily affected by the costs of clean energy transition, particularly those spending a higher proportion of their income on energy and related services).

If any of these options were answered "yes," the category of social protection policies and other support for low-income households was coded as "yes" for that NDC. Therefore, the data presented for this variable should not be considered a comprehensive list of all possible social protection policies that NDCs could include.

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