

Promoting Human Rights in Climate Action: A Global Stocktake Informed by Human Rights

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL STOCKTAKE?

The [global stocktake](#) (GST) is a process mandated by the international climate regime to assess collective progress towards achieving the objectives of the [Paris Agreement](#) in terms of mitigation, adaptation, and finance, and in the light of equity and best available science. The process takes place every five years and is the Paris Agreement's "ratchet mechanism," as it is expected to compel countries to raise their level of climate ambition. The GST is mandated to inform the preparation of future Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as well as to enhance international cooperation for climate action; thus, it is central to accelerating progress towards all objectives set out in the Paris Agreement. Given its inclusive modalities, the GST offers an opportunity for a broad range of actors — including people and institutions not involved in the UN climate negotiations — to inform the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

In addition to the principles of equity and best available science laid out in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement, the GST should review climate action in light of human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples, public participation, gender equality, food security, intergenerational equity, the ecosystem integrity, and a just transition for workers. A holistic approach to the GST will ensure the integration of climate action and rights and therefore the effective realization of all the goals of the Paris Agreement, will help ensure that climate action is integrated with other aspects of sustainable development, and will promote international policy coherence. The GST also provides an opportunity to consider the progress or challenges to taking real action that addresses the drivers of climate change, including the need to phase out fossil fuels and to address land-use emissions through effective and inclusive policy making. Importantly, according to the modalities agreed upon at the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) in 2018, the GST can also take into account progress related to loss and damage, which is not mentioned in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement itself.

This briefing provides detailed information about the 2022-2023 GST process, identifies opportunities to provide input, and offers guidance about how to contribute to the process through the submission of information addressing why considering human rights is essential to effective climate action.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The GST is about understanding meaningful implementation of the Paris Agreement. To be effective, climate action must be informed and guided by human rights, and therefore the GST should be as well. The Paris Agreement's preamble reiterates the importance of human rights-based climate action that is integrated with additional crucial social principles (see box). However, there remains a discrepancy between the preamble's vision and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The GST is therefore an important instrument to recenter these human rights principles at the core of climate action. Moreover, the GST should adequately address all aspects related to the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In this context,

there is an important role for stakeholders and rightsholders to share relevant information, so that important elements such as fossil fuel phase-out, addressing land-use emissions, and loss and damage are sufficiently taken into account.

Based on the rules adopted for it and the open call for submissions, the GST is expected to be a more inclusive process than the climate negotiations and is therefore an important opportunity for stakeholders and rightsholders, including civil society, independent national institutions such as [National Human Rights Institutions \(NHRIs\)](#), and Indigenous Peoples, to inform the implementation of the Paris Agreement. As the GST will take place every 5 years, this first GST will set a strong precedent for future iterations of this process, making it a particularly important opportunity.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES IN THE PREAMBLE OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT

- Emphasizing the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to **sustainable development and eradication of poverty**;
- Recognizing the fundamental priority of **safeguarding food security and ending hunger**, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change;
- Taking into account 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;
- Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should — when taking action to address climate change,— respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on **human rights, the right to health, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity**;
- Noting the importance of ensuring the **integrity of all ecosystems**, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and noting the importance for some of the concept of "climate justice", when taking action to address climate change;
- Affirming the importance of **education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation at all levels** on the matters addressed in this Agreement.

HOW IS THE GST ORGANIZED ?

Article 14 of the Paris Agreement states that Parties '*shall periodically take stock of the implementation of this Agreement to assess the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of this Agreement and its long-term goals*' and '*shall do so in a comprehensive and facilitative manner ... in the light of equity and the best available science*'. The modalities for how to conduct the GST were further specified in the Paris Agreement rulebook adopted at COP24 in Katowice ([decision 19/CMA.1](#)). The GST will consist of three components:

1. Information collection and preparation,
2. Technical assessment, and
3. Consideration of outputs.

The timing of the first two components can overlap. Furthermore, the rules specify that the equity and science will be addressed in a Party-driven and cross-cutting manner. The decision also lists the sources of input for the GST, including inputs from Parties, latest reports of the IPCC, reports of the established bodies, the synthesis reports prepared by the Secretariat during the technical assessment phase (see below), relevant reports from UN agencies and other international organizations, which should be supportive of the UNFCCC process, relevant reports from regional groups and institutions, and submissions from non-Party stakeholders and UNFCCC observer organizations. It also requests the Chairs of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies to develop guiding questions for the GST (see below).

The First Global Stocktake: Process and Timing

COP26 marked the beginning of the first GST, which will be concluded at COP28 in November 2023. The modalities of the GST have been [further developed and clarified](#) by the Chairs of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies. Their guidance contains the timeline for the GST as well as 34 thematic (mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation and support) and cross-cutting guiding questions aimed at directing the first component of the GST.

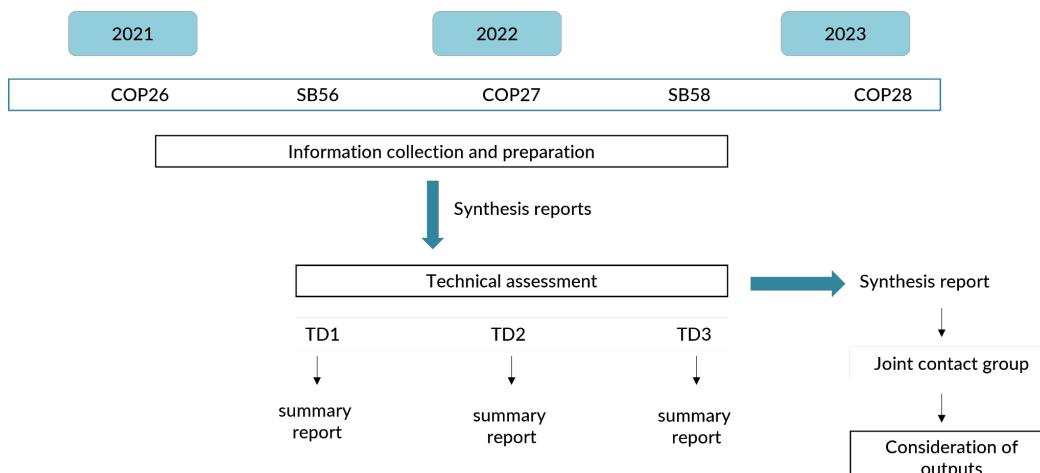


Figure 1: Timeline of the first GST (based on timeline in [non-paper by the Chairs of the Subsidiary Bodies](#))

> Information Collection and Preparation

This phase will run in 2022 and 2023, until the 2023 June UN Climate Change Conference subsidiary bodies session (SB58). It will overlap with the technical assessment phase. The information provided in this phase will be aggregated into four synthesis reports (greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation efforts, NDCs, and means of implementation and support). The deadline for the first submission in this phase is 28 February 2022.

> Technical Assessment

The technical assessment starts at SB56 in June 2022 and will consist of three technical dialogues that use 'narratives' related to the GST's subjects (mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation and support). The outputs of the technical dialogues will be summarized in individual reports per topic and in one overarching synthesis report. The technical assessment will be concluded at SB58 in June 2023.

> Consideration of Outputs

The consideration of the outputs will happen at COP28 in November 2023. After presentations of the outputs of the technical assessment, and high-level events, a draft decision for adoption by the Parties to the Paris Agreement will be prepared through Party-driven negotiations.

PROVIDING INPUT TO THE GST ON HUMAN-RIGHTS BASED CLIMATE ACTION

The Paris Agreement established the GST as a critical periodic process to review the ambition of climate action. For climate action to be effective, it has to respect and promote human rights. Ensuring that the GST takes human rights and social principles into account is therefore a matter of realizing effective climate action and policy coherence. This section discusses why this is the case for the principles contained in the Paris Agreement preamble and more broadly, and how the GST should take them into account.

> Human Rights

Effective, real, and meaningful climate action is necessary to respect and promote the human rights of millions of people around the world who are threatened by loss of food and water sources, displacement, and aggravated conflict over scarce natural resources associated with the climate crisis. It is also critical that climate actions themselves respect human rights and are implemented with appropriate safeguards to avoid human rights abuses.

> Indigenous Peoples' Rights

Indigenous Peoples are on the frontlines of the direct consequences of the climate crisis as well as the strategies adopted by States to address it, and at the same time they are agents of change who can and do provide real and effective solutions. The [IPCC has recognized](#) the importance of indigenous knowledge and it should be given sufficient attention in the GST. Furthermore, the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) should apply to projects designed to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis, and the GST should take into account to what extent this is a reality in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

> Land and Tenure Rights

Land and natural resources are essential to millions of peoples' access to food, shelter, culture, work, water, health, and well-being. Climate action must account for the unique role that ecosystems and land play in fulfilling these rights. While it is critical to end deforestation, action in the land sector must not be relied on as a substitute for the rapid phase-out of fossil fuel emissions and the scale up of renewable energy. Individual and community rights to land and resources are often threatened by increased pressures from development and climate measures, which in the worst cases have resulted in land grabbing and displacement of thousands of people. Thus it is essential that climate action safeguards and promotes land tenure rights. Additionally, strengthening land tenure and (collective) land rights has been identified as one most effective climate policies in the land sector, as secure land tenure rights enable preservation and sustainable use and management of land. The IPCC [recognizes in its Special Report on Climate Change and Land](#) that securing land tenure rights leads to improved climate action, a recognition that was [welcomed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities](#).

> Gender Equality

[Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis](#) due to gender inequalities that restrict access to education, resources, decision-making spaces, and other opportunities. At the same time, women and girls possess critical knowledge and are developing innovative gender-just solutions to mitigate climate change impacts. The IPCC recognizes that [reducing gender inequalities can reduce vulnerability to climate change](#). Moreover, [a gender lens helps to increase ambition and effectiveness of climate action](#). These specific elements as well as a cross-cutting approach to gender-responsive climate action should be taken up in the GST.

> Food Security

As highlighted by the [IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land](#), food security is already and will increasingly be affected by the climate crisis. Evaluating the impact of climate actions on food security is vital to assessing the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and thus to the GST. Moreover, to meet the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, action in the land and agriculture sectors will be vital but cannot lead to violations of land rights, including customary and collective tenure, nor the right to food.

> Just Transition and Decent Work

A just transition is central to ensuring socially just and equitable climate action as it is fundamentally about realizing the transition from a fossil-fueled economy to a fossil-free one in a fair and inclusive way for workers and in a manner that creates decent work conditions. Work under the International Labour Organization (ILO) has led to the development of "[Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#)". The GST should provide a space for Parties to explain how they have assessed the employment impacts of their decisions, and most importantly, the measures they will take to support workers and uphold core labour rights.

> Ecosystem Integrity

A healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, and water, and has recently been [recognized by the Human Rights Council](#) as a universal human right. Maintaining and enhancing the integrity and resilience of the environment and ecosystems is critical for the long-term effectiveness of climate mitigation and adaptation. The obligation to ensure the

integrity and resilience of natural ecosystems must be considered when deciding on national climate actions and should be a topic of evaluation in the GST.

> Public Participation

The public's right to participate in environmental decision-making is a core principle of international environmental law, as confirmed by [the Aarhus Convention](#) and [the Escazú Agreement](#). Combating climate change and promoting sustainable development require the effective engagement of all actors of society. Governments cannot act alone, and public participation and access to information to empower citizens to play an active role in the transition are of crucial importance. It is therefore important that the GST takes these elements into account when looking at, for example, mitigation and adaptation actions including development of NDCs and national adaptation plans.

> Intergenerational Equity

Intergenerational equity and the duties of present generations towards future generations have long been recognized as fundamental principles of international environmental law. Children and youth are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis and they, as well as future generations, will face the consequences of climate change for a greater percentage of their lives. As such, it is essential that the GST consider intergenerational equity.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL PRINCIPLES IN THE GUIDING QUESTIONS

The [list of guiding questions](#) for the first phase of the GST stresses the importance of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and actions, gender, a just transition, and poverty eradication, as well as equity. Many of the guiding questions also implicitly invite human rights-based inputs. For example, when analyzing the adequacy of Parties' adaptation response (see question 14), gender responsiveness, safeguarding food security, and Indigenous Peoples' knowledge should be important elements in Party and non-Party submissions. Or when looking at 'the state of progress on provision of means of implementation and support' (question 16), the amount to which climate finance has effectively reached Indigenous Peoples and local communities will be highly relevant. The below box shows a non-exhaustive list of selected and slightly reformulated guiding questions relevant for human rights and related social principles, and to ensure that all aspects of the implementation of the Paris Agreement are addressed. A full list of the original questions, including their references to the Paris Agreement, is available [here](#).

Ensuring that inputs are submitted in line with the guiding questions will significantly increase the chances that these perspectives will be taken into consideration and reflected in the synthesis reports and key messages resulting from the GST. Moreover, as many submissions are expected, the inclusion of executive summaries and coordination between the UNFCCC constituencies can contribute to the likelihood of inputs being reflected in the final synthesis reports.

N°	QUESTIONS
Human Rights, including Indigenous Peoples' rights, Land Rights, Public Participation & Gender Equality	
6.	What information is needed for countries to strengthen domestic emissions reductions and removals in line with Paris Agreement goals and what recommendations can be developed to increase ambition?
8.	What are the global levels of climate risks, observed and potential impacts and vulnerability of human and ecological systems caused by climate change and at what temporal scales?
9.	What is the state of adaptation efforts, support, experience and priorities, taking into account the best available science, gender perspectives, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples, and local knowledge systems ?
29. & 33.	What climate actions have been undertaken by non-Party stakeholders and UNFCCC observer organizations, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities , and what has been their impact? Which ones have worked and what obstacles or barriers have been encountered?
34.	What efforts have been made towards enhancing the engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate action ?
Social and Environmental Principles, including Just Transition and Decent Work, Safeguarding Food Security and Ecosystems Integrity	
13.	How can Parties increase the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low GHG emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production , consistent with the goal to increase adaptive capacity and resilience?
20.	How has support provided enabled just transition in developing countries ?
25.	What efforts have been made towards enhanced understanding and addressing the social and economic consequences and impacts of response measures , including while implementing mitigation policies and actions towards the achievement of the Paris Agreement goals and relevant support systems?
Equity, including Intergenerational Equity	
4.	What is the projected increase in the global average temperature, consistent with the aggregated effect of NDCs and how can Parties enhance climate ambition and action to reach the temperature goals, in the light of best available science and equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty ?
10.	What are the support needs of developing country Parties and to what extent has progress been made towards assessing the support needs of developing country Parties?

15.	What are the barriers and challenges , including finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building gaps, faced by developing countries?
16.	What is the state of progress on provision of means of implementation and support and mobilization and provision of support, including (but not limited to) on the objective to make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development, and the obligations regarding achieving a balance between finance for mitigation and adaptation, and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, such as LDCs and SIDSs, including the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation.
27.	What information was provided by Parties on fairness considerations, including equity , and how has it been reflected in their actions?
28.	What information is available in relation to equity in mitigation, adaptation, and support to evaluate the fairness and equity of climate contributions based on national circumstances and capabilities?

Ensuring that the GST addresses all relevant dimensions of climate action, including Fossil Fuel Phase-Out, Adaptation, and Loss and Damage

1.	What are the past and present trends of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by sources and removals by sinks -and their underlying drivers- and mitigation efforts undertaken by Parties and their impacts on emissions and removals?
14.	To what extent do adaptation efforts of Parties ensure an adequate adaptation response according to the temperature limits identified by the Paris Agreement?
19.	What is the state of current global climate finance flows, trends, and data gaps ? What information is available on efforts to make the financial flows consistent with the pathways towards low GHG emissions and climate-resilient development and what are the knowledge gaps?
26.	What efforts have been made to enhance understanding, action, and support, on a cooperative and facilitative basis, related to averting, minimizing, and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change? And, what progress has been made?

Although targeted input addressing specifically the guiding questions will lead to a more effective uptake in the GST, it is important to note that the chairs of the Subsidiary Bodies themselves have indicated that the list of guiding questions provided should not be seen as exhaustive and that submissions can therefore go beyond this scope. This clarification therefore leaves the door open to input addressing aspects of climate policies critical to meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement such as land tenure and land rights and fossil fuel phase-out.

ENGAGING IN THE GST

Meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders and rightsholders is key to ensuring that the GST effectively fulfills its mandate. Specific attention should be given to participation of individuals and groups in the most vulnerable situations, as well as local communities and Indigenous Peoples. The modalities established for the GST state that '*the global stocktake will be a Party-driven process conducted in a transparent manner and with the participation of non-Party stakeholders*'.

The UNFCCC has issued a [call for submissions](#) for the GST addressed to Parties and observer States, UN agencies and other international organizations that are supportive of the UNFCCC process, and *non-Parties stakeholders and observer organizations*. This is an important opportunity for civil society and other actors to engage in the GST and ensure that it fully embraces equity as well as adequately considers human rights and other social and environmental principles throughout the GST despite the fact that some of these elements are not explicitly mentioned in the guiding questions informing the GST. Importantly, any actor can submit input: it is not a requirement to have [UNFCCC observer status](#). This is therefore an important opportunity for a wide range of actors, including independent national institutions such as NHRIs, to contribute to the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. The first submissions are expected in [the submission portal](#) by 28 February 2022. Additional opportunities to input submissions will be possible in summer 2022 and winter 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING EFFECTIVELY IN THE GLOBAL STOCKTAKE FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

To increase the chances for inputs to be taken into consideration, organizations working to promote rights should consider the following:

- Providing input by the deadline set for initial submissions: 28 February 2022, and for future submissions;
- Working with partners to submit collective contributions;
- Putting forward clear, concise, and actionable inputs that directly address one or more of the guiding questions;
- Bringing concrete cases and stories into the process, with a focus on equity, social principles and human rights, and emphasizing real-world testimonies, good practices, or positive experiences learned from challenges; and,
- Seeking to address in particular those guiding questions that relate to the integration of human rights in climate action.

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