

POSITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS OF THE PHILIPPINES ON THE PRINCIPLES OF JUST ENERGY TRANSITION (JET) IN THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT¹

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The Philippines is in the midst of a critical period on the road to sustainable development. As an industrializing, lower middle-income nation that is also one of the most vulnerable to the climate crisis, the gravest existential threat to current and future generations, it faces multiple challenges that would significantly hinder its capacity to achieve energy security, ecological resilience, and economic growth, among other development targets.

Among these challenges is the continuing overreliance on fossil fuels, especially on coal that has caused the Philippine power sector to be inflexible, outdated, and at the mercy of volatile global prices that become even more expensive during times of crises. The planned expansion of our country's dependence on fossil gas, another imported pollutive fuel like coal, is likely to not only prolong the current status quo that heavily burdens Filipino consumers with high energy bills, but also undermine public and environmental health and its self-determined targets on climate action.

Another significant issue is on energy transition minerals, which are needed to further develop renewable energy technologies. However, this also places the Philippines as an existing global hotspot for mining, which raises much concern from many civil society groups, local communities, and indigenous peoples, given the numerous previous and ongoing cases of destructive mining practices that have harmed communities and ecosystems alike.

Addressing these challenges is part of the pathway to achieve national sustainable development, which necessitates a **just energy transition (JET)**. This is a long-term process that would involve a fundamental transformation of our energy sector, which would influence entire economic and social systems, attitudes, and lifestyles that have been shaped by our current energy systems for decades.

A comprehensive, holistic, and systemic approach for examining the current Philippine energy, climate, economic, and development landscape is vital to the implementation of JET. All proposed solutions must be examined in terms of their benefits and consequences to all affected stakeholders and the natural environment. While urgency is required for addressing multiple issues, careful implementation is also needed to ensure that adverse effects are minimized, if not fully avoided.

We present the following as the principles that define our perspective of JET in the Philippine context.

1. ***Renewables-focused***. At its core, JET acknowledges that the era of dominance of fossil fuels in our global and national economies and societies must come to an end,

¹ Text in red indicates changes made during the National Convening of Philippine CSOs on JET on 19 September 2023; text in blue indicates changes made after the National Convening

especially in a country as vulnerable to the climate crisis as the Philippines. The transition must be focused on the growth and development of indigenous renewable energy (RE) resources, especially solar and wind, until they collectively become the predominant energy source that is also a primary driver of sustainable development across all levels. The expansion of pollutive energy sources and promotion of waste-to-energy, nuclear energy, and artificial carbon capture, use, and storage technologies as 'climate-friendly' solutions must be rejected to prevent hindering RE development.

2. ***Climate-aligned.*** The transition from fossil fuels to RE must be aligned with the goals under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, especially in limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures. It must also be in line with the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which reports that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by 43% by 2030 and net-zero emissions be attained by 2050 for the world to achieve the 1.5°C target².
3. ***Peoples-centered.*** JET accounts for the differing local circumstances and conditions, and prioritizes responding to the energy and economic needs of all peoples in the Philippines, especially the most vulnerable populations (i.e., indigenous peoples, women, youth, economically- and culturally-marginalized, diverse gender identities) and other stakeholders directly affected by such endeavors. It is driven by the voices and actions of these peoples as both stakeholders and co-investors and, in turn, drives to ensure an energy system that provides sustainable, stable, secure, sufficient, accessible, and affordable energy for every Filipino.
4. ***Rights-based.*** JET must be implemented in such a manner that respects, protects, and upholds the rights of nature, human rights, and their interlinkages, especially those related to local communities and indigenous peoples that would be directly affected by the energy programs and projects, both from conventional and renewable energy sources. Their substantive and procedural rights must be held in the highest regard by policymakers and project implementers across all stages of the process. Decisions to be undertaken must recognize and be respectful of the historical injustices that many vulnerable peoples experienced in the context of establishing energy infrastructure in the Philippines.
5. ***Inclusive.*** Energy is a common good, which means it should be democratized. All stakeholders have the right to access, use, and manage energy resources sustainably. National and local governments must ensure that sufficient and appropriate spaces are allocated for the meaningful participation of Filipinos in every step of the decision-making processes for enabling JET, from planning to the monitoring phase. Mechanisms must also be implemented to guarantee a safe and secure mode of participation in energy-related decision-making processes, especially the inclusion of the most vulnerable peoples (i.e., indigenous peoples, women, youth, economically- and culturally-marginalized, diverse gender identities). Information, education, and communication strategies must be developed to enable and empower communities to

² The IPCC indicates that this is a likely outcome, based on the projections in its Sixth Assessment Report.

meaningfully engage in JET-related decision-making processes, tailored to local circumstances and languages.

6. ***Human-secure.*** Sectors and communities that would be most impacted by energy transition programs, projects, and activities should not experience harm due to these endeavors, unintended or otherwise, or climate hazards. These include, but are not limited to, laborers in fossil fuel industries, communities with strong relationships to fossil fuel facilities that would be phased out, and communities residing nearby sites of proposed RE projects, especially hydro, geothermal, and biomass. In cases where economic or social adverse impacts cannot be fully avoided, potential damages must be minimized, with mechanisms for compensation and/or redress be provided to affected stakeholders by project proponents. Energy infrastructure must also be climate-proofed, able to withstand climate shocks and enhance community resilience.
7. ***Equitable.*** Everyone has a role to play in enabling JET in the Philippines. However, different responsibilities must be designated for each sector, community, and institution, corresponding to their resources, capacities, and local, cultural, and/or historical contexts. Local communities must properly benefit from JET operations. In the context of global climate action, the Philippines should also not be influenced to follow similar pathways for JET as developed countries, in line with the principles of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities” and “historical responsibility” that guide the multilateral policy-making environment for decades. Nevertheless, this should not be used as an excuse for policymakers to not implement a fast, just, and transformative JET that befits its energy, climate, economic, and development goals and national circumstances.
8. ***Ecologically-respectful.*** All energy transition programs, projects, and activities must ensure the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity and avoid the disruption of existing ecosystem services that economically and socially benefit nearby local communities and indigenous peoples. Any energy-related endeavor across the value chain should avoid taking place within areas of critical biodiversity importance and/or ancestral domain, in accordance with existing Philippine laws and policies and customary laws of indigenous peoples, unless with prior consent from concerned stakeholders following appropriate legal standards and guidelines.
9. ***Transparent and accountable.*** Implementing actors of JET programs, projects, and activities, from both the public and private sector, must be transparent about the goals, targets, timelines, and progress of their endeavors to all relevant stakeholders. Legally-binding mechanisms must be established to hold government agencies, funding institutions, energy facility owners and operators, and other implementing entities accountable for their actions throughout the value chain of these projects, especially when harm has been done to communities and/or ecosystems and biodiversity.
10. ***Developmentally-sustainable.*** JET must be an anchor of national and local climate, energy, and development laws, policies, and plans in the Philippines, covering the entire value chain. It must contribute to a climate-proofed, self-sufficient, flexible, decentralized, democratized, cost-effective, affordable, and energy sector, complemented by an

industrialization plan that primarily benefits Philippine economic sectors, that also manages the demand side through mainstreaming energy efficiency and conservation practices. This would result in poverty alleviation, improving quality of life, increasing resilience to climate change impacts, and more effective green governance, ensuring that no one is left behind.