

## Building blocks for a just transition in place

South Africa is in a position where it has a multitude of policies, processes and interventions that could be leveraged to contribute towards affecting a just transition to a green economy.

This emerged as a central theme during a Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) Development Dialogue webinar held yesterday, which focused on exploring a number of cross-cutting measures aimed at facilitating a just transition in South Africa. A range of speakers highlighted that the country already has some existing policies, programmes and approaches in place which could be used to contribute towards a just transition.

This dialogue was the sixth in a series of conversations focused on how to foster a just transition to a green economy in South Africa's context of inequality, poverty and unemployment; and how to effectively address the negative impacts of climate change on vulnerable stakeholders, such as workers, small businesses and low-income communities.

In setting the scene for the discussion which unfolded, TIPS senior economist Gaylor Montmasson-Clair explained the broad dimensions necessary for a just transition which include procedural justice (ensures an inclusive process), distributive justice (looks at impact and who pays and who benefits) and restorative justice (considers past damage to communities, individuals and the environment and looks at how to rectify and address such damages caused). He indicated that whilst all three were important and mutually reinforcing, just transition discussions in the country have mainly focused on the first two areas. However, in view of the historical context of South Africa, "we have to pay particular attention to restorative justice." He stressed that it was not only up to government to facilitate a just transition but "everyone has a role to play and we have been putting too much emphasis on the state around a just transition... government needs to drive the transition but everyone has a role to play – the private sector, labour and communities."

Having highlighted the different dimensions of a just transition, Montmasson-Clair provided an extensive overview of the existing labour market, industrial and social protection policies, which could be harnessed to contribute towards a just transition. Picking up the point that the country has existing programmes, policies and processes are in place, GreenCape CEO Mike Mulcahy outlined the potential to use a cluster approach to foster a just transition. GreenCape has been working with stakeholders to understand and then remove barriers to commercially-viable projects across energy, water and waste. He highlighted some examples of where such an approach led to the accelerated uptake of small-scale embedded generation (SSEG) in municipalities. He stated that key learnings have pointed to the fact that, in a green economy, the economics change fast and so working together provides an opportunity to understand the changing economy to unlock investment and much-needed job opportunities. Mulcahy pointed out that GreenCape is currently working towards establishing a green cluster in Mpumalanga to support the province's transformation.



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Elaborating on the issue of job opportunities, Tashmia Ismail-Saville, the CEO of the Youth Employment Service (YES), outlined the focus of the government, labour and business initiative aimed at tackling the country's youth unemployment challenge. Based on her experience and interaction with companies, YES had yet to focus on placing youth in low-carbon sectors. She stressed the importance of all parties working together to unblock the potential of small businesses in local communities taking up new opportunities associated with the transition. A failure to achieve this would only entrench inequalities. Ismail-Saville concluded that training is an important part of investing towards achieving a just transition as well as getting SMMEs involved in the green economy. Tashmia further pointed to the need for policy certainty around the ease of doing business, along with incentives to drive investment and increased employment of youth.

Janavi Da Silva, director of programmes at GreenMatter took up the issue of skills development within the context of a just transition and highlighted the shortage of critical skills in the environmental space. She stated that there is an urgent gap that needs to be filled with regards to youth employment and skills development in matching the needs of businesses with the supply of youth employment. In addition, through GreenMatter work, she found that there was a shortage of opportunities for young people in long term employment. Through advocacy, skills intelligence, stakeholder engagement, marketing and communications, and professional and leadership, GreenMatter attempts to increase the employment potential of young graduates and entrepreneurs in the green economy space.

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