The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Angus Robertson
Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Scottish Government

1 November 2024

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Climate Justice Fund

As part of our international development work, the Committee recently undertook a one-off evidence session on the Climate Justice Fund.

Please find attached for your information, and that of your ministerial colleague for Net Zero and Energy (as included in the cc line), an annexe with a short summary of that session. I have also copied in the Convener of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

We trust that this will be helpful to the Scottish Government in preparation for your input to COP29 in Baku.

Yours sincerely,

Clare Adamson

Clare Adamson MSP
Convener

Cc Gillian Martin MSP, Acting Cabinet Secretary or Net Zero and Energy; and Edward Mountain MSP, Convener, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

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Annexe

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Climate Justice Fund

Introduction

1. As part of its international development work, and in the run-up to COP29, on 10 October 2024 the Committee held a one-off session on the Climate Justice Fund (CJF). We had undertaken a similar short piece of work before COP26, writing to the Scottish Government on 7 October 2021.

2. We sought to focus this work on three aspects in particular—

   - Progress made since COP26 and expectations for COP29;
   - How the Scottish Government's Climate Justice Fund measures up against the principles of climate justice and whether it is delivering on its climate justice objectives; and
   - The part Scotland can play in promoting global climate justice

3. We note that several of the themes to emerge from the 10 October 2024 session – relating to leadership and credibility on the international stage, monitoring and evaluation, and policy coherence (or alignment) – also arose during our recent inquiry into the Scottish Government's National Outcomes and Indicators relating to international policy; the report of which the Committee published on 29 October 2024

Policy context

4. The Scottish Government wrote to the Committee on 17 June 2024 to inform us of the publication of the Contribution to international development: report 2021 to 2023 report.

5. That report outlined that following an Independent Review in 2021 the Scottish Government had adopted a revised approach to its CJF, one incorporating three pillars—

   - Distributive Justice: equal access to and sharing of resources and benefits and is used in climate justice definitions to include both access to resources and benefits, and equitable sharing of costs of responding to climate change;

- Procedural Justice transparent, fair and equitable decision-making processes; and
- Transformative Justice structural inequities and focuses on mainstreaming understanding of climate justice issues, as well as building capacity.[1]

6. It also stated that the CJF work for the remainder of this parliamentary term would focus on two multi-year programmes: Climate Just Communities (CJC) and our Non-Economic Loss and Damage Programme (NELD), both of which had been launched at the end of 2023.

Evidence

7. At our meeting on 10 October 2024, the Committee heard from the following witnesses—

- Bridget Burns, Executive Director, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO);
- Professor Tahseen Jafry, Director, Mary Robinson Centre for Climate Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University; and
- Ben Wilson, Director of Public Engagement, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF)

8. There were also written submission from the witnesses. What follows is a summary of the oral evidence that we heard.

Scotland's credibility

9. It was suggested that Scotland's credibility on the international stage was "potentially damaged"[2] by missed climate change targets but that leaders should take stock and emphasise the positives as well as providing transparency on targets and the reasons for not meeting them. Professor Jafry said that despite the situation looking "very negative", we should "consider how much Scotland has achieved relative to other nation states."[3]

10. She told us Scotland had "a strong voice" and wondered if the Scottish Government could "pivot" to demonstrate a commitment to climate justice at home and abroad as this was not simply about how we reach net zero but how to get there in a "fair and equitable" way.[4]

[1] Contribution to international development: report 2021 to 2023 - gov.scot
[2] Official Report, 10 October, Col 10
[3] Official Report, 10 October, Col 8
[4] Official Report, 10 October, Cols 8-9

11. SCIAF said the “more the targets are missed in Scotland, the more loss and damage will be caused overseas” and that this had to be addressed. Scotland could go to COP29 “still committed to new zero 2045” and say: “This is what we got wrong. We’re taking it really seriously, and this is how we’re going to address it”, not only through policy but by “overall governance”.[5] To avoid negatively impacting on public moral and policy momentum what was needed was “a sense of optimism” that net zero would be of benefit “not just for the climate and for the countries where SCIAF works, but for people in Scotland” in terms of urban living, public transport, air quality etc.[6]

12. The need for positivity was echoed by WEDO, the suggestion being we should “not underestimate” Scotland’s achievements in respect of “political leadership on climate justice in the global landscape” and its role in “moving the needle on loss and damage”. Other countries were “not at the same level” in their recognition of the “need to transition” and Scotland could usefully share learning form its own experience.[7] “Critical points” in enhancing credibility included policies to invest in renewables rather than fossil fuels and the oil and gas sector not being a “leading voice in the transition”, the aim being—

    “We want countries to focus not on the “if” or the “when”, but on the “how”. How can we do that in a just way?”

Progress and funding

13. COP29 would be essentially “a finance COP” with a focus on the support for and delivery of funding. Professor Jafry suggested the importance of the Scottish Government seeking to “play a pivotal role” in the achievement of “the new collective goal on finance”.[8]

14. SCIAF agreed that finance would “dominate all the headlines”, predicted “huge conflict over the quantum of funding” and suggested a “sub-goal” on loss and damage within the collective finance goal should be “a strategic priority”.[9] WEDO similarly did not want loss and damage “lost in the conversations” and saw the pursuit of a sub-goal as the “key entry point”.[10]

[5] Official Report, 10 October, Cols 9-10
[6] Official Report, 10 October, Col 10
[7] Official Report, 10 October, Col 10
[8] Official Report, 10 October, Col 2
[9] Official Report, 10 October, Col 2
[10] Official Report, 10 October, Col 4

15. Despite not being a participant in the negotiations, SCIAF felt the Scottish Government should still be able to adopt a position, provide comment, and in terms of "soft power"—

"…the value of the Scottish Government being at COP29 is not just about the negotiations. It can have a role in engaging in activities with civil society, other sub-state actors, researchers and experts to build up and deepen its understanding of loss and damage, renewables and the journey to net zero."[11]

Who finance is for and who it is reaching

16. Emphasising the "quality" of discourse on climate finance, WEDO sought "an ambitious science and needs-based goal" that could improve and simplify "direct access to grants-based finance for marginalised and disenfranchised groups", including women and girls, and focus "human rights and gender equality in climate finance". The renewal of the gender action plan was "a critical point" and, with "so many wonderful examples" that could be a "model for other countries", Scotland could have a key role in feeding into the narrative of what climate justice finance should look like and who it would be accessible to.[12]

17. For long-term sustainability, WEDO felt that finance should focus on capacity building, community control, and upskilling. The organisation had worked with the Scottish Government on a "gender-just climate solutions programme", focused on "adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage", "strengthening capacity" and understanding what the "barriers" were to scaling-up. The emphasis was on "changing the nature of what needs to be invested in" rather than simply "shifting energy systems".[13]

18. Professor Jafry spoke about a piece of research on climate finance in Ghana which had looked "to get into the depths of finance architecture" and found that—

"…only a very small percentage of the finance that reaches a country such as Ghana actually gets to the people who need it the most—the poorest and the most vulnerable."[14]

19. She explained that "a lot of the finance gets stuck" in "processes and procedures" and there was "very little by way of accountability, transparency and transferability". Her emphasis was on effective climate finance, reaching the frontlines and "those who need it the most", and assessment. An understanding

[11] Official Report, 10 October, Col 3
[12] Official Report, 10 October, Col 4
[13] Official Report, 10 October, Col 7
[14] Official Report, 10 October, Col 5

of impact mattered if Scotland was to have “a robust and consolidated narrative” to influence others.[15]

Monitoring and evaluation

20. Professor Jafry emphasised the need for a “baseline” for what we were trying to achieve from funding in terms of “advocacy, humanitarian assistance, climate-just communities and so on”. She said it was important to have “a collective vision of where it all sits”. Her understanding was that “research and evidence on monitoring and evaluation are currently lacking” and this meant “an impact downstream” for sustainability and post-intervention analysis when funding came to an end—

    “It is important that that is done now, because that in itself will shape the very strong narrative that the Scottish Government needs in order to be able to position itself on the global stage and influence others to be on the journey with it.”[16]

21. SCIAF suggested that “another comprehensive review of the climate justice fund would be a good thing to do” after the funding of current projects in this Parliamentary session has finished. It had been in receipt of £800,000 of climate justice funding for loss and damage work this year and was “implementing the £8 million grant in Rwanda as part of the climate-just communities programme”. Currently it carried out its “own monitoring and evaluation”, engaging “closely with other recipients”, but suggested that evaluation in general remained “relatively ad hoc” and “a comprehensive review” would be welcome.[17]

22. WEDO highlighted “the broader political leadership” that Scotland might offer from the advocacy work through “the Loss and Damage Fund board and the Green Climate Fund board”. It saw a need to find ways “for more simplified direct access for front-line communities”, the learning from which could “impact on moving us towards more climate-just finance”.[18]

Policy alignment

23. Professor Jafry thought the language around just transition and climate justice should be clarified, with public engagement and policy alignment in mind—

[15] Official Report, 10 October, Col 5
[16] Official Report, 10 October, Col 11
[17] Official Report, 10 October, Col 12
[18] Official Report, 10 October, Col 13

"At the moment, "just transition" simply feels like a fancy term that is out there—it will be used at COP29, as well—but the padding around it needs to be better articulated."[19]

24. SCIAF hoped that the energy plan and just transition plan would be published soon. It suggested the Scottish Government "could show the same courage on fossil fuels and the just transition" as it had through its leadership for loss and damage, acknowledging that such an approach would have to be taken "in partnership with the UK Government".[20]

25. WEDO said it was "critical" to understand "any resource can be extracted to the point of exploitation and environmental degradation" and this was also the case for "the green economy". It worked with communities from "Chile to Zimbabwe" where the land was "filled with lithium and other critical transition minerals" and the fear was that, without taking into account the rights of local people, "we will do harm".[21] The suggestion was that Scotland could "be a leader on the issue…from a climate justice perspective" as it had been for loss and damage.[22]

26. Professor Jafry also saw the need to consider who will benefit from a just transition, with a risk that the the success of the global north could come "at a significant social and environmental cost to the global south". Stressing the importance of understanding "what a just transition means and how climate justice fits" with that, she asked in the context of government policies—

"How are things aligned? How can others adopt principles and policies on climate justice and a just transition? Which Government departments do those things sit in?"[23]

Conclusion

27. **The Committee highlights this evidence to the Scottish Government and colleagues on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.**

[19] Official Report, 10 October, Cols 15-16
[20] Official Report, 10 October, Col 16
[21] Official Report, 10 October, Col 17
[22] Official Report, 10 October, Col 18
[23] Official Report, 10 October, Col 18