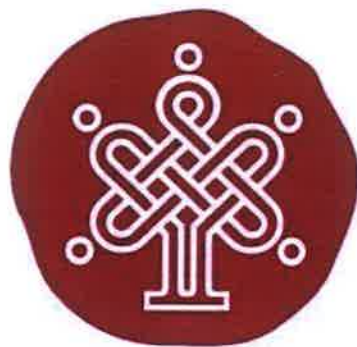


# **Nalanda Recommendation on Just Transition and Sustainable Development**



**Nālandā**  
UNIVERSITY

WORKSHOP ON JUST TRANSITION TOWARDS CIRCULAR ECONOMY & SUSTAINABILITY  
School of Ecology and Environment Studies (SEES), Nalanda University  
Society for Environment Education & Development (SEED), Lucknow  
Council on Energy Environment and Water (CEEW), New Delhi  
22 & 23 FEBRUARY 2024, NALANDA UNIVERSITY

**We, the professionals** belonging to the diverse academic streams, disciplines and expertise, including students and scholars, gathered at the vibrant, historic and green as well net zero campus of Nalanda University, invite academia, educators, policy and decision-makers from India and the countries of the global south belonging to educational and research institutions of higher education, NGOs, governments, and academia, to work jointly and with dedication and devotion to save the planet from the looming triple planetary crisis and concurrent sustainability challenges by devising action-oriented strategies for creating a better tomorrow for all of us and the living world.

Further, in view of the planetary crisis and sustainability challenges being multi-dimensional, interrelated and not constrained by geopolitical boundaries, there is an urgent need for cooperation and agreed action, underlining the importance of connecting people across nations, cultures, generations, and professions.

We, therefore, adopt the **Nalanda Recommendation on Just Transition and Sustainable Development 2024**, affirming the role of education, specifically environment and sustainability education or education for sustainable development, to provide the basis for humanity's transformation toward a just and sustainable world.

In today's rapidly changing world, the imperative for sustainable development has never been clearer. As we confront the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequality, our efforts towards sustainability must be inclusive, equitable, and just. Central to this endeavour is the concept of 'just transition,' which emphasises the need to ensure that no one is left behind as we transition to more sustainable practices. This requires careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and targeted interventions to support workers, communities, and industries affected by economic and environmental shifts. In this context, **we offer the following recommendations for advancing just transition and sustainable development, recognising the interconnectedness of economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental stewardship.**

[1] The Role of Knowledge Institutions in driving leadership and Change must be acknowledged and recognised at all levels while planning for climate and planetary sustainability. With its rich legacy and tradition of creating knowledge societies, Nalanda University is rightly placed to champion this cause.

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[2] Midway towards the time targets of SDGs, we are much behind expectations in most of the goals. It is a matter of grave concern. As Plan A in this regard is not working, we need a Plan B powered jointly by scientists, technologists and social scientists based on vision and stewardship for the next half. Changing human behaviour is emerging as a principal transformational lever in our race against time to the SDGs. It is logical that behavioural and other social scientists will come forward to drive Plan B. Meanwhile, science and technology should continue contributing to Plan A. It is time to affirm that we are *sapiens*. This calls for cooperation and collaboration among countries.


[3] Private and public financial institutions must align their investments with SDGs by integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into investment decisions, scaling up green financing mechanisms, and incentivising investments in sustainable projects and technologies. ESG and CSR (corporate social responsibility) initiatives should support securing finance for adaptation and decarbonisation, including quality green Jobs.

[4] Governments and organisations should prioritise integrating just transition principles into economic development, environmental protection, and social justice policies. This integration ensures that transitions to more sustainable practices consider the needs and well-being of all stakeholders, particularly vulnerable communities and workers in industries undergoing transformation. Meaningful engagement with diverse stakeholders, including workers, communities, businesses, and civil society organisations, is crucial for developing and implementing just transition strategies. This engagement fosters collaboration, builds trust, and ensures that transition plans reflect the priorities and perspectives of those directly affected.

[5] Investments in education, skills development, and training programs are essential to ensure a smooth transition to a more sustainable economy. These programs should equip workers with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in emerging green industries while supporting those transitioning from carbon-intensive sectors. There is an urgent need to start short-term training and capacity-building courses in green skills, ESG and SDGs.



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[6] Local communities are important stakeholders in sustainability. Their empowerment fosters ownership, resilience, and innovation. Supporting community-led projects, such as renewable energy cooperatives, sustainable agriculture programs, and green infrastructure projects, can drive positive change while promoting social equity and inclusion.

[7] India's net-zero goals by 2070 imply significant transformations across sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These transformations would present opportunities on the one hand and are also fraught with significant risks on the other. It is therefore recommended that the net-zero debate shouldn't be viewed as an environmental debate; it is, in reality, a debate on economic transformation. The net-zero transformation would entail opportunities like domestic manufacturing of solar panels, green hydrogen production for exports, and transitioning out of oil in the transport sector. This transition must be just and sustainable. Only a planned approach will ensure this. Net zero is a long-term vision, and all short-term actions should be aligned with this long-term goal and guide the country's economy towards it. Ultimately, this goal should help India achieve the troika of jobs, economic growth, and sustainability.

[8] Unlike the traditional linear economy, which follows a "take-make-dispose" pattern, the circular economy encompasses various strategies, including waste prevention, eco-design, remanufacturing, sharing platforms, and extending producer responsibility to reduce their ecological footprint, promoting resource efficiency, creating new economic opportunities, and contributing to environmental sustainability. Citizen science should play a crucial role in advancing the principles and practices of the circular economy by engaging citizens in data collection, analysis, and problem-solving related to resource management, waste reduction, and sustainable consumption. Citizens can participate in projects to track waste generation, composition, and disposal in their communities. Citizen scientists can help 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) approaches within the circular economy framework by collecting data on the types and quantities of waste produced and its environmental impact. In general, citizen science has the potential to serve as a catalyst for innovation, education, and advocacy within the circular economy movement, empowering individuals to actively participate in the transition toward a more sustainable and resilient future.

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[9] Citizens should actively engage in environmental stewardship to advocate for sustainable practices within their communities. They should also foster collaboration between citizens, businesses, researchers, and policymakers to co-create innovative solutions and technologies that promote a circular economy and advance ESG goals. There is a need to establish platforms or hackathons where various stakeholders can brainstorm ideas, prototype solutions, and test new approaches to address sustainability challenges such as resource scarcity, waste management, and social inequality.

[10] Citizens should be engaged in citizen science and sustainability through the use of existing mobile apps and web platforms, such as TrashOut, OpenLitterMap, The Great Bubble Barrier, Waste Atlas, GoodGuide, Ethical Barcode, OurFish, ESG Reporting Apps, iNaturalist, NASA GLOBE Observer, eBird, Community Science for Watershed Health, Citizen Weather Observer Programme (CWOP), Marine Debris Tracker, CitiSci.org, SciStarter.org, etc.

[11] Strategies should be developed to encourage producers to adopt biodegradable materials instead of plastic. Tax incentives should be provided for products with high recyclability potential. Regulations such as extended producer responsibility (EPR) should be enforced to hold manufacturers accountable for managing the waste generated by their products.

[12] Youth should be empowered to become active change agents in their communities and beyond. HEIs (Higher education institutions) should provide platforms for youth leadership development, mentorship, and civic engagement in sustainability initiatives and climate action campaigns.

[13] India's flagship LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) should be leveraged into Plan B for Sustainable Development. It should be promoted at all levels to encourage the adoption of sustainable lifestyles, consumption patterns, and practices such as energy conservation, waste reduction, organic farming, and responsible consumption.

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[14] Green infrastructure and technology investment should be ensured to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience. Research and innovation in clean energy, sustainable agriculture, water management, and ecosystem restoration should be supported in academic and research institutions.

[15] Closing the Loop: A Blueprint for a Plastic-Free Tomorrow: Conveys the idea of a closed-loop system where plastics are recycled and repurposed rather than discarded. Due to its versatility, plastic waste is crucial for fostering a sustainable environment. There is a need to empower youth, specifically students, to take an active role in reducing the ecological footprint, promoting recycling, and creating a culture of responsible waste management.

[16] Awareness about greenwashing should be created on a broader scale, specifically misleading claims about environmental practices, making products or practices appear more environmentally friendly than they are. There is a need to assess eco-friendly claims critically and scientifically for consumers to make informed choices that contribute to sustainability rather than fall prey to deceptive marketing tactics.



**Prof. Dr R. Jaishanker**  
Dean, School of Ecology  
and Environment Studies  
Nalanda University.



**Prof. Dr Vimal Katiyar**  
Dean (Research)  
Indian Institute of Technology  
Guwahati.



**Dr Ram Boojh**  
Society for Environment  
Education and Development  
fmr. UNESCO/UNEP Ecology Advisor.



**Dr Vaibhav Chaturvedi**  
Fellow, Council on  
Energy, Environment and Water  
New Delhi.

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Rajgir, India.

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