



WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2022

**TOWARDS A RESILIENT PLANET:
ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE FUTURE**

February 16-18, 2022



MacArthur
Foundation

“Responsible climate action towards a low carbon & resilient pathway: An inclusive worldview”

February 16, 2022 and 11.30 – 13.00 hours | Duration: 90 minutes

About the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)

The **World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)** is the annual flagship Track II initiative of **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)**. Instituted in 2001, in 2021, the Summit series marked 20 years in its journey of making ‘sustainable development’ a globally shared goal. Over the past two decades, the Summit platform has pioneered conversations by bringing together governments, scholars, corporates, youth groups, thought leaders, and civil society representatives from across the world.

The present state of planetary health and humanitarian crises calls for revisiting the agenda around global action and equity. The 21st edition of the WSDS is being held under the umbrella theme of **‘Towards a Resilient Planet: Ensuring a Sustainable and Equitable Future’** from **16th to 18th February 2022** in a virtual format.

Background note

“Responsible climate action towards a low carbon & resilient pathway: An inclusive worldview”

While retaining focus on de-carbonisation and cleaner energy options, one cannot afford to lose sight of the human dimensions as socioeconomic factors like lives and livelihoods of vulnerable segments of population who are at a greater risk, access to services and opportunities, rights and entitlements, local and institutional capacities etc. In this context, seeding ‘Just transition’ assumes significance and this new lens offers an insightful understanding about how one takes a holistic view of energy, climate and development considerations in order to effectively deal with energy, technology and socioeconomic barriers and envision newer opportunities.

In India especially resource rich geographies contributed significantly towards State and national revenue generation and created islands of prosperity and affluence. On the other hand, one sees

pockets of insufficiency, extreme poverty, weakening of social capital and inherent inequities, which seems all pervasive. Such vulnerabilities and paradoxes deepened further during the unprecedented pandemic that has hit the humanity hard than ever before, globally. Such stark realities may be better understood as one takes closer view of the coal-based economy like in a resource rich State, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, which is mostly tribal dominated, recognized for its backwardness, poverty and poor human development scenario. Coal mining offers opportunities to many upstream and downstream sectors but it also brings miseries, environmental damages and enhances climate related risks. It is the need of the hour to take a closer look at the fossil-fuel economy, environment, people, market and other actors / stakeholders. The ability to phase down, and eventually phase out coal has become a top priority. This needs the adoption of a fair transition paradigm that addresses climate change mitigation while also assuring the protection of workers, communities, and companies, as well as economic advantages.

Many coal producing industries do not assign importance to the necessity of a planned closure of coal mines and it is evident in several locations, where coal mines closed without adequate planning and skill generation. In absence of any alternative economic choices and social support systems, poor people became more vulnerable as coal dependent local businesses got impacted, many migrated to other locations and crisis deepened. Moving forward, if coal-phase down/ phase out happens in an unplanned manner, the entire local economy would collapse and it will destabilise the social fabric. Besides, local businesses, MSMEs, communities and pro-coal constituencies often fail to think beyond coal as it creates insecurity. General perception is, any scenario without coal would be impossible or risky as many, especially the local people lack adequate market linked skills and owing to coal industry related employment, many never thought of optimally using land or forest resources for generating alternative or supplementary livelihoods choices. MSMEs generally are driven by profit orientation rather than broader considerations such as climate change necessitating adoption of efficient and green technologies which could create better working conditions and reduced environmental hazards. Alternative scenario has hardly been part of mainstream discourse.

Hence, while transitioning to the envisaged non-fossil fuel economy in time, it is crucial to map implications of coal phase-down/-out and create a blueprint for a proactive planning and an inclusive, fair and humane transition. Basis TERI's past interaction and research in Betul (Madhya Pradesh), there was a felt need for an action research agenda in the coal producing belts which could create a ground for further reflection and trigger a futuristic worldview. This will go a long way in providing an insightful understanding of fossil-fuel dependence and the ecosystem. TERI in association with MacArthur Foundation has embarked on this journey, which will further enable us in creating a stakeholder platform, develop a just transition framework and create a milieu for alternative thinking. Eventually this initiative will enable TERI in creating a blueprint for shaping future policies, adapting to changing scenario and offering pragmatic solutions for mitigating risks.

Any transition from fossil-fuel dependence to alternative cleaner options would have wide ranging ramifications on the existing ecosystem in any coal producing belt and the intent of the Just transition project is to put our thoughts together for a humane transition and to build resilience. While we take this opportunity to share the contours of the project that has a futuristic tenor, we also pose few key questions which could set the stage for deeper deliberation, assimilation of multiple perspectives and future action.

The key intent of this discussion forum is to share the ideas of just transition and to elicit views of the participants which could enrich our research and provide a larger perspective for further reflections. Basis this deliberation, brainstorming and consolidation of multiple views, TERI would create a thought note which could guide future policy, research and action on the ground.

Key questions

- (i) Who are the key stakeholders that can play an important role in making the transition to low-carbon economies fair and just?
- (ii) What are channels through which engagement can be established across various actors?
- (iii) What are the challenges envisaged towards implementing a just transition strategy in the energy sector?
- (iv) Can coal producing States take a balanced view of human development scenario and economic as well as political priorities?
- (v) Given the geographical and cultural diversity of communities in coal mining locations, how opportunities at the local level be explored and implemented with support from the government, business, and civil society organizations?
- (vi) How public entities in a federal governance structure can work together in developing strategies/policies that help in creating social and development opportunities for affected communities?