

TOWARDS A GENDER-JUST TRANSITION

Key Takeaways From
The Nordic Meeting 2025



Global Compact
Network Finland

**NORDIC
MEETING
2025**

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THANK YOU

Special thanks to the Nordic networks of UN Global Compact, and to the Nordic Council of Ministers / Nordic Information on Gender, NIKK for supporting the event.

FOREWORD

NORDIC COMPANIES have long been recognized as global leaders in sustainability, consistently setting the bar high for environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and strong governance. Their commitment to equitable and inclusive sustainability ensures that the transition to a greener economy is not only ambitious but also fair, leaving no one behind. Bringing together Nordic strengths for collective progress is crucial not only for us but also for future generations – regionally and globally.

A just transition approach reinforces the idea that the shift towards a sustainable future must be socially inclusive, ensuring that workers, communities, and vulnerable groups such as women, children, and Indigenous Peoples benefit from economic transformation rather than bear disproportionate burdens. By leveraging the strengths of Nordic businesses, we can drive systemic change that prioritizes both climate action and social equity.

During the two-day Nordic Meeting 2025, together with over 200 hundred participants from 140 Nordic companies, we explored how a just transition can be embedded into business strategies through a gender-just lens. A high-level plenary with expert speakers provided valuable insights on just transition and interactive workshops created an inspiring platform for addressing challenges and accelerating progress in three key areas:

1. Creating Ambitious and Just Climate Transition Plans
2. Ensuring Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement for a Just Transition
3. Integrating Due Diligence to Build Sustainable Supply Chains

This conference marked the 6th Nordic Meeting organized by the Nordic networks of the UN Global Compact. The Nordic Meeting 2025 was hosted by UN Global Compact Finland and organized in collaboration with the country networks of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland.

The Nordic Meeting 2025 was supported by Nordic Council of Ministers / Nordic Information on Gender, NIKK.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM DAY 1

The first day consisted of keynote speeches and panel discussions under the theme just transition. The overarching notion was that just transition is not just a moral responsibility but a pathway to future business success. Nordic businesses are uniquely positioned to champion sustainable change while ensuring social equity.



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This is precisely the moment to reinforce—not retreat from—the core principles of corporate sustainability.



Nordic Businesses Leading the Way

THE CONFERENCE'S opening keynote speech was given by **Karen Ellemann**, the Secretary General of The Nordic Council of Ministers. Ellemann emphasized that Nordic collaboration remains a powerful driver in achieving a just and sustainable transition, even amidst current political and economic uncertainties. Nordic businesses thrive on shared values and should continue their regional cooperation and lead by example.



Evolving Corporate Responsibility Regulatory Landscape

THE INTERNATIONAL sustainability framework is evolving rapidly, with the increasing legal accountability of corporate responsibility significantly influencing business operations. The discussions highlighted the critical importance of Nordic business engagement in shaping policy. The collective voice of businesses is essential to advocate for regulatory frameworks that are impactful, predictable, and harmonized across jurisdictions. The panelists acknowledged the current global trend of deregulation but stressed that this is precisely the moment to reinforce—not retreat from—the core principles of corporate sustainability. They emphasized a return to fundamentals: integrating environmental and social responsibility into business strategy, governance, and operations. Far from being a cost, sustainability was framed as a key driver of long-term value creation, innovation, and competitive advantage.



Aligning Net Zero Transition Plans with a Just Transition

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL issues are inextricably linked to human rights, making net zero transition plans essential to support a just transition. Overlapping transitions are unfolding across sectors, all within the broader context of global crises. The risks posed by climate change are too significant to ignore—the shift to net zero should be seen not only as a necessity, but as a long-term business opportunity. The panelists underscored the urgency and complexity of achieving a just net-zero transition in 2025, a year marked by geopolitical instability and heightened security concerns. They emphasized that the dual goals of reducing emissions and ensuring fairness cannot be pursued in isolation, calling for integrated strategies that align climate action with broader societal priorities, including defense and institutional stability. They highlighted the Nordics' leadership in navigating these challenges, with businesses increasingly recognizing that aligning net-zero strategies with principles of justice not only addresses ethical imperatives but also strengthens long-term resilience.

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Benchmarking for a Just Transition

ACHIEVING a just transition requires systemic change. Benchmarking tools enable companies to set measurable, actionable goals, translating just transition principles into concrete practice. The greatest human rights risks arise from actions that disproportionately impact vulnerable groups. Therefore, businesses must adopt integrated transition planning that evaluates multiple sustainability areas in a cohesive and holistic manner.



Bridging the Gap – Pathways to a Gender-Responsive Just Transition

WOMEN REMAIN underrepresented in green industries, hindered by systemic barriers such as discrimination, unpaid care responsibilities, and limited access to education and funding. Without a gender-responsive approach, the green transition risks leaving women behind. Globally, increasing resistance to gender equality and DEI efforts is creating risks for businesses, challenging their public commitments. This can be an opportunity for companies to demonstrate leadership by standing up for human rights. The panelists emphasized that the green transition must be intentionally gender-responsive to avoid deepening existing inequalities. The panel called for inclusive policies, gender-focused training and reskilling programs, and stronger corporate accountability to embed gender equality into sustainability strategies. They warned that without these measures, the green transition risks reinforcing social and economic disparities rather than correcting them.

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For businesses involved in the green transition, meaningful engagement is essential from the start.



A Just Transition for All - Upholding Indigenous Peoples' Rights

WHILE THE GREEN transition may appear to be a new frontier for many, Indigenous Peoples such as the Sámi people, have long faced the negative impacts of large-scale development projects on their lands, cultures, and livelihoods. Compliance with national laws or the possession of land permits is not always sufficient to ensure the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights. The panelists stressed that for businesses involved in the green transition, meaningful engagement is essential from the start. Practical examples

highlighted the consequences of neglecting Sámi cultural rights, particularly their right to practice traditional livelihoods like reindeer herding, which are closely tied to their identity and way of life. Companies should align with international standards such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). A just transition, the panelists emphasized, must protect Indigenous cultural heritage and ensure that green projects support—not undermine—the communities they affect.



Leveraging the SDGs for Sustainable Change

THE FINAL KEYNOTE from the Former President of Finland, **Tarja Halonen**, brought together key themes from across the discussions, focusing on how businesses can strategically align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to drive meaningful and lasting impact for future generations. In many parts of the world, human rights are increasingly under threat by anti-gender movements and forces opposing the rule of law and international norms. Against this backdrop, the President emphasized that the private sector must play an active role in safeguarding human rights and reinforcing the global sustainability agenda. In her words: Sustainability is like cleaning the house—you can't clean your house just once; you have to keep it clean.





KEY TAKEAWAYS AND BEST PRACTICES FROM DAY 2

The second day consisted of three interactive deep dive sessions, during which the participants had an opportunity to share their best practices and insights. The workshops focused on climate transition plans, stakeholder engagement, and due diligence in supply chains.



1

Creating Ambitious and Just Climate Transition Plans

THIS WORKSHOP aimed to take a deep dive into human rights aspects of climate transition plans and address questions such as: What are the steps to creating a credible climate transition plan? How do we ensure integration of human

rights, gender, and social equity considerations in climate transition plans? What are the potential conflicts between climate and human rights considerations?

PROBLEMS

Siloed systems that hinder integrated and inclusive decision-making.

Insufficient visibility and traceability in supply chains obscure social and environmental impacts.

Local and cultural challenges e.g. land use conflicts, community resistance, inequality in green jobs.

Financial performance is often prioritized over environmental and social responsibilities.

Competing priorities: tensions arise when climate mitigation efforts compromise human rights, particularly in the sourcing of critical materials.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Integrate sustainability and human rights targets into executive performance metrics.

Treating human rights as a core component of due diligence and impact assessment.

Move beyond climate-centric metrics to foster transparency, ethical practices, and bottom-up monitoring.

Encourage systemic collaboration through cross-sector partnerships and meaningful dialogue with affected communities.

Ensure climate strategies are aligned with national regulations and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, promoting equity and resilience.

2

Ensuring Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement for a Just Transition

THIS WORKSHOP explored how businesses can take a human-centered approach and integrate stakeholder voices into their climate action, fostering meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

By embedding meaningful engagement into their strategies, businesses can enhance resilience, strengthen relationships, and contribute to a just transition that benefits both people and the planet.

PROBLEMS

Failure to identify and engage key stakeholders early in the process can undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of climate initiatives.

A lack of trust from local communities may hinder meaningful collaboration and long-term engagement.

Navigating cultural nuances and local power dynamics presents a complex challenge for external actors.

Corporate priorities may unintentionally overshadow the needs and interests of local communities and economies. Promoting women's participation in green transition sectors is difficult due to entrenched gender norms and male-dominated work environments.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Establish partnerships with a broad range of local actors—including NGOs, women's groups, Indigenous communities, educational institutions, governments, and trade unions—to better understand social dynamics, cultural contexts, and diverse perspectives.

Foster trust through a flexible, inclusive approach that prioritizes active listening and co-creation over pre-determined processes.

Maintain ongoing dialogue with communities, supported by local intermediaries such as NGOs, to ensure cultural sensitivity and sustained engagement.

Reflect critically on the company's own goals and assumptions and align them with the priorities and lived experiences of affected stakeholders. Identify specific barriers to women's participation and design targeted interventions that support their inclusion, both in the workplace and within the broader social context.

3

Integrating Due Diligence to Build Sustainable Supply Chains

THIS WORKSHOP focused on integrating due diligence into the development and management of sustainable supply chains. Through expert insights, company examples, and peer exchange,

participants explored key topics – including integrating risks into procurement and contracts, compliance, data management, and effective grievance mechanisms.

PROBLEMS

Supplier expectations are fragmented and creating joined sustainability goals is challenging.

Develop Codes of Conduct based on international standards, customize them to supplier contexts, and ensure they are practical and visual for better understanding and implementation.

Smaller suppliers may lack the resources or knowledge to meet due diligence requirements, risking non-compliance or disengagement.

Companies struggle with managing vast amounts of supplier data without a clear strategy, often collecting data that is not actionable or aligned with legal needs.

Many supply chains lack accessible, trusted channels for grievances, particularly for vulnerable stakeholders or in local contexts.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Incorporate audit rights, data responsibilities, and sustainability clauses directly into contracts; align due diligence processes with company-wide practices like compliance, monitoring, and KPIs.

Foster trust through a flexible, inclusive approach that prioritizes active listening and co-creation over pre-determined processes.

Use supplier segmentation for targeted engagement; provide training (e.g., webinars, online tools) and allow flexibility for supplier maturity to support development.

Choose and integrate data management tools that align with procurement systems, focus on critical risk areas, and ensure the data collected is used in decision-making.

Create accessible, culturally sensitive grievance channels; define clear escalation processes; include grievance clauses in contracts and train both internal and external users.

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Global Compact
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...and to our speakers:

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