



## **Second Meeting of the Task Force on Green Jobs and Climate Change**

**(Brussels, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008)**

### **Summary Report**

In December 2007, the ITUC General Council took the decision to establish "a Trade Union Task Force to implement the Green Jobs campaign and oversee agreed activities including those of the ad hoc trade union working group on climate change". The Task Force met for the first time on 17th June, 2008.

The Task Force was composed with due regard to regional and gender balance and constituted by three ITUC Executive Bureau members from each region - ITUC-Africa, ITUC-Asia Pacific, ITUC-TUCA and PERC - as well as representation of the GUFs and TUAC.

The second meeting of the Task Force took place on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008. The meeting was chaired by Sharan Burrow, President of the ITUC.

#### **1. Adoption of the Agenda and approval of Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting**

In introductory remarks, the Chair highlighted the importance of climate change issues and the need for understanding its threats and opportunities, keeping in mind the need for securing jobs for the generations to come and for reflecting the industries of tomorrow in current union debates. Emphasis was needed on energy intensive sectors in the transition towards a low-carbon economy, particularly since the most efficient processes are those who will secure space for new jobs. The Chair called for increased inclusion of climate change in unions' national agendas, including in collective bargaining.

The Task Force adopted the Agenda and approved the minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Task Force.

#### **2. Trade union assessment of COP14 (Poznan, 1-12 December 2008)**

The ITUC introduced the background to and main outcomes from the latest UNFCCC high level conference (COP14), which had taken place only a few days before the task force meeting, on the basis of a draft evaluation report that was distributed to the meeting.

It was recalled that the 2008 UNFCCC Conference was a mid-way rendezvous for establishing a clear path towards Copenhagen in 2009. Social and economic concerns related to climate change and climate change mitigation had taken increased prominence in 2008, and due to the effects of the financial and economic crises, they are also expected to appear in 2009 discussions – which had both positive and negative implications for the final Copenhagen negotiations.

The role trade unions can play in providing the tools for ensuring a fair transition needs to be developed much further in the current negotiations. Looking towards COP15, it will be essential to get higher visibility for our demands. Actions need to be taken by trade unions from both developed and developing countries to strengthen their involvement in this area for obtaining an ambitious climate change agreement that contains social and labour-oriented accompanying measures, including, when appropriate, through the involvement of trade unionists in governmental delegations

Particular attention was given to the process which led to an agreed ITUC policy statement to the UNFCCC, which was enriched by more than one hundred comments by affiliates, and showed that dialogue and negotiation can achieve excellent outcomes.

Several participants recognised the ITUC's good work on this issue. Various proposals were made, such as organising a high level meeting with UNFCCC officials, building a 'green jobs' component into ITUC submissions to G20, including this issue in the upcoming ITUC development cooperation meeting, and strengthening relationships with NGOs, among others.

Attention should be placed on the evolution of sectoral agreements, the impact of the current economic crisis and the need for maintaining attention to climate change and to ensuring that economic recovery measures reinforce the emergence of low carbon sectors, such as those related to renewable energies, forestry and sustainable construction - still not available in many developing countries. Suggestions were made regarding the need for linking with the ITUC Youth Committee and for including climate change in the agenda of the next Council of Global Unions meeting. The ITUC should disseminate materials that could assist its regional organisations to introduce the issue to many unions that as yet were insufficiently aware of climate change and the trade union perspective.

The LO-Denmark, hosting the COP15 trade union activities, drew attention to various conferences the Danish government would organise in the coming months of 2009, in which trade union participation would be significant. The LO-DK website already featured a link to COP15 containing trade union material. It was essential to push for as ambitious agreement as well as one that was signed by as many countries as possible in Copenhagen at COP15, and LO-Denmark would do their utmost to make the trade union input a great success.

The need for increasing the visibility of unions' demands, in relationships with media as well as with governments, was also highlighted.

In conclusion, the Chair highlighted the serious dangers that climate change would inevitably create, for example for the hundreds of millions living in vulnerable coastal areas, providing graphic evidence of the need for effective trade union mobilisation in support of climate change mitigation. The coming year would require immense focus by trade unions on the UN climate change negotiations. There would be much pressure on the ITUC's resources and those affiliates so placed needed to provide assistance to the ITUC to further develop its programmes and activities in this area.

### **3. "Green Jobs" and the "Green New Deal"**

The ITUC reported on the Green Jobs initiative, launched by ITUC, ILO and UNEP (and joined later by the IOE) aimed at raising the profile of employment in climate discussions and identifying decent work opportunities arising from a new kind of economy based on a sustainable environment. A report had been published: "Green jobs: towards decent work in a sustainable, low carbon society". The follow up to the

initiative was still under discussion. However, it was clear that trade unions have to support further work on the linkages between social and environmental aspects, in particular in cooperation with other actors.

It was highlighted that this was a vital agenda for the ITUC and one that had gathered broad support from several key actors, such as UN SG Ban Ki Moon. However, there was still much work to do in order to effectively mainstream the challenges posed by sectoral transformation in this concept. Additional work was also needed to get UNEP to fully integrate green jobs into its programmes of work, including capacity building.

Overall, the meeting gave strong support to the Just Transition framework, and to the need for strengthening work on 'green jobs' at the national level as well.

#### **4. The future agenda of the Task Force**

Task force members were invited to reflect on future priorities of the Task Force and to convey their views to the ITUC Secretariat, particularly regarding the content of research and materials, and bearing in mind a series of areas identified in the first meeting of the Task Force, namely:

1. Means for raising the profile of climate-related union issues at the national level;
2. Possible actions to promote environmentally-friendly policies that could lead to positive transformations in the world of work (including green jobs) and work towards sustainable societies;
3. Long-term analysis on how trade unions can mainstream environmental issues in union policies that ensure healthier livelihoods for workers and their communities;
4. Oversight for other ITUC related activities including those of the ad hoc trade union working group on climate change, as well as union research, training and education activities;
5. Reflect on further work to be done with governments, employers and civil society;
6. Discuss union policies regarding climate change and specific issues related to it.