

Trade Unions Join World Demands for an Ambitious Climate Agreement



Launch of the trade union statement to the COP14 in Poznan, Poland

Brussels, 27 November 2008: On the eve of major international climate negotiations in Poznan, Poland, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), in a new groundbreaking policy statement, has clearly affirmed its commitment towards reaching a socially-fair and climate-engaged agreement by the end of 2009. ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder explained the movement's main reasons for its strong position: "Accelerating climate change, financial disorder and food & oil price instability share the same origins: a lack of commitment to regulation, a push towards 'small government' and free market economics, and an international system that has underperformed in terms of its governance of globalisation. All these crises always end up affecting the most vulnerable among us, those who did little to cause these problems."

Ryder continued, "The trade union movement calls on governments to take immediate action on climate change. It is a moral responsibility to do so. We must collectively initiate an indispensable transition towards a more equitable and just society, a society in which the most vulnerable no longer pay the price of irresponsibility. We now have, through sustainable production and consumption patterns, a unique and historic opportunity to transform our societies for the better. For these reasons, trade unions support ambitious action in developed countries, in line with IPCC recommendations and entailing far-reaching investments in green jobs and other just transition policies. We call on industrialised countries to lead the way and provide the necessary financial and technological support so that developing nations can engage fully on the path towards a more environmentally sustainable and socially just society."

"The very same activities that have been proposed to address the global financial crisis, such as fiscal stimulus packages and investment encouraged into strategic areas, could reap a double benefit if they are oriented toward investment in new technologies, in green jobs, and in helping the world cope with the changes that are already inevitable due to climate change," said UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer, the UN's top climate change official.

"However, this must happen in context of international cooperation and not in a piecemeal way. Therefore, we must use the time available in Poznan wisely to make significant progress on the way to designing an ambitious new international climate change deal," he added. An agreed outcome on strengthened international action on climate change is to be reached in Copenhagen at the end of 2009.

“A commitment towards equity and social dialogue, and an analysis of the impacts on labour markets and social protection schemes, all form essential elements that must be integrated when elaborating and implementing climate policies. Our ability to reach an ambitious and socially just climate framework for the post 2012 period depends on this. Millions of workers throughout the world, united within the international trade union movement, are ready to engage in this historic transformation process,” concluded Ryder.

See below Key elements of the trade union statement for COP14. For the full trade union statement for COP14 [please click here](#)

[Concrete proposals for the negotiations can be found here](#)

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The trade union statement for COP14:

An ambitious multilateral framework: the global trade union movement supports a long term process which will put the world on a path towards limiting the global temperature rise to no more than 2°C and urge Governments to follow the IPCC scenario for reducing global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 85% lower than their 1990 levels by the year 2050. Trade unions agree on the need for developed countries to take the lead in emission reductions. The IPCC concludes that a reduction by them of at least 25%-40% by 2020 below 1990 levels is necessary in order to attain the global 85% reduction by 2050. The ITUC recognises the urgency of taking action and supports these 2050 and 2020 targets. It also recognises that specific circumstances in developed countries may dictate targets that are more or less ambitious, provided that the net emission reduction of Annex I countries is within the targets advocated by the IPCC. A post-2012 agreement must also mobilize resources and technology to enable developing countries, in particular major emitters, to achieve GHG emission reduction, stabilisation or controlled increases through a range of policies including targets on renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean coal technology and avoided deforestation, among others, while providing access to decent livelihoods for their citizens.

A fair transition: The great transformation that is needed to change our unsustainable, carbon-intensive societies represents an arduous task, but it also provides us with an opportunity. The just transition trade unions are calling for is based on the promotion of the opportunities offered by the ‘Green Economy’ (the promotion of green & decent jobs and the greening of workplaces, based on sustainable industrial development and an equitable share of the burden of responsibilities and gains) and on the design and implementation of accompanying measures for all the other productive sectors that will have to adapt to the constraints arising from a low carbon economy. The ‘Green Economy’ must have a socially-fair base: democracy, social partner participation in decision making processes and respect of human and labour rights form the baseline conditions in order to ensure a smooth and effective transition towards a sustainable society.

Fighting poverty, enabling adaptation: Poor communities are already suffering from the impacts of climate disruption. As indicated in the 2008 UNDP Human Development Report,

Hurricane Katrina provided a potent reminder of human fragility in the face of climate change, especially when impacts interact with institutionalised forms of inequality. All governments, in the North and the South, have a key role to play in providing the political will and the necessary coherence in the fight against climate change. Synergies between decent work creation and adaptation policies must be explored, since the provision of a sustainable income reduces vulnerability. Quality public services and strong public sector leadership at all levels of government must be at the heart of the global response to climate change. The role of women and the need for achieving gender justice is also key in achieving climate justice. Finance: In a context of financial instability where most economies are facing grave risks of deep recession and rising poverty, it is time to seize the opportunity for changing the political and economic system that has led to the current financial, social and ecological tragedies. The time has come for an in-depth reform of the international financial system, for innovative international financing instruments, for fair rules in international trade and for making our societies low-carbon and climate-resilient.

The means for achieving this transition should come from many sources: Domestic (including reforms in fiscal systems; and from banks, which should allocate an important part of their resources for credits for environmental and socially friendly-initiatives, among others), and International (including through international taxation of financial transactions, which is technically feasible and would be efficient in mobilising an important amount of funds, and other new forms of financing).

Trade unions call on governments to take a responsible and forward-looking approach, as these measures would enable achievement of fair development in poor countries and could provide the seedbed for clean and healthy economic growth in the future.

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates.

www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI

For more information, please contact the ITUC Press Department on the following numbers: +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018.

Labour Movement Gains Official Recognition at UN Climate Change Conference

Brussels, 8 December 2008: In recognition of the important work on climate change conducted by the trade union movement, the UN body dealing with climate change (the UNFCCC) has granted the ITUC the select formal status of being an “official constituency” in the Climate Change process for the ITUC’s contributions and its participation from now on.

“Trade unions believe climate change is not only an environmental issue, but also is about social rights and rights to development, and that is the contribution we bring to the UN process,” said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. “Combating climate change will imply huge transformations in production, ones that are necessary in order to change our unsustainable, carbon-intensive societies to address climate change challenges but which require significant government intervention. It is how well this economic transformation is

managed that will determine whether the new jobs created will be more numerous than those lost, whether it is socially just or traumatic, and whether it is broadly supported or encounters resistance from labour.”

Trade Unions specifically call for a “Just transition framework” to be introduced into the negotiations. This means promoting the opportunities offered by the ‘Green Economy’ (the promotion of green & decent jobs and the greening of workplaces, based on sustainable industrial development and an equitable share of losses and gains) and the design and implementation of accompanying measures for all the productive sectors that will have to adapt to the constraints arising from a low-carbon economy.

“The UN must place workers and workplaces at the core of its strategy to tackle climate change,” said Ryder. “Unions are calling for innovative multilateral solutions, without which the main victims of climate change will be the workers, in particular in developing countries.”

The ITUC recognises the urgency of taking action and supports the 2020 and 2050 targets set in the IPCC conclusions on the need for a reduction of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of at least 25%-40% by 2020 below 1990 levels in order to attain a global reduction of 85% by 2050. The ITUC’s groundbreaking policy statement to the UNFCCC conference in Poznan clearly affirmed its commitment towards reaching a socially fair and climate-engaged agreement by the end of 2009, and put forward concrete demands to ensure a fair transition.

“The necessary transformations in production to meet these targets are of such magnitude that they cannot be effected without a basic consensus in society and involving workers,” concluded Ryder. “Formal social dialogue with trade unions, employers’ organisations, and other civil society actors needs to be integrated and ensured at international, national and workplace levels.”

If you want to know more about the trade union position on the Green economy, read the full Trade Union statement for COP14, or interview a Trade Union Delegate, please contact Judith Carreras at jcarreras@sustainlabour.org, tel. +34 649179986.

The Trade Union delegation at COP14 is composed of more than 100 delegates from 40 countries.

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themes : Globalisation & economic affairs , climate change

Trade Union Commitment to Strong Outcomes at UN Climate Change Conference

Poznań, 11 December 2008: As Ministers arrive in Poznań for the final negotiations of the two-week annual global conference on climate change, trade unions are stepping up their efforts to get just transition, green jobs, trade union consultation and assistance for developing countries included in a strong and ambitious final document to be adopted by the UN body dealing with climate change, the UNFCCC.

The trade union movement calls on governments to take immediate action on climate change

“The trade union movement calls on governments to take immediate action on climate change,” stated ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. “We have a unique and historic opportunity to transform our societies for the better. This is all the more important at this time of economic crisis, when a Green New Deal can provide the basis for a recovery that both provides decent work and contributes to the fight against climate change. We call on industrialised countries to lead the way on implementing green jobs measures domestically and on the emissions reductions recommended by the IPCC, at the same time as providing the necessary financial and technological support so that developing nations can engage fully in the process.”

In the closing sessions of the technical committees at the UNFCCC meeting on 10 December, Roger Toussaint of the AFL-CIO spoke on behalf of all ITUC members when he stated “More than ever before, many members of our unions, my own included, are from countries that over the years failed to create decent employment opportunities. Adaptation programmes can create jobs, raise income levels, put food on the table, send children to school and help build stable communities. We urge you to ensure that the new treaty contains the sufficient financial resources to meet the adaptation challenges facing workers all over the world, in particular the global South.”

Sophie Dupressoir from the European Trade Union Confederation emphasised that “European unions do not want to see a weakening of the EU’s climate package. However, we believe that the climate package would be much more acceptable socially if it had been matched with a green jobs and just transition package.” And Zahoor Awan from the Pakistan Workers’ Federation (PWF) called for a “social driver” to be integrated into the negotiations for a far-reaching climate agreement to be agreed next year. “The trade union movement considers that this discussion must ensure the inclusion of social provisions in the next agreement under the principle of a just transition in order to ensure broad social consensus when implementing these climate policies,” Awan stated. “The UN must place workers and workplaces at the core of its strategy to tackle climate change,” concluded Ryder. “Unions are calling for innovative multilateral solutions without which the main victims of climate change will be the workers, in particular in developing countries.”

If you want to know more about the trade union position on the Green economy, read the [full Trade Union statement for COP14](#), or interview a Trade Union Delegate, please contact Judith Carreras at jcarreras@sustainlabour.org tel. +34 649179986.

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To read the [speech of Roger Toussaint, president of the Transport Workers Union Local 100 of New York City](#)

To read the [speech of Sophie Dupressoir from the ETUC](#)

To read the [speech of Zahoor Awan](#)

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themes : climate change

Trade Unions Call for Accelerated Commitment to Climate Negotiations

Brussels, 15 December 2008: At the close of the annual UN climate change meeting in Poznan, Poland, trade unions have expressed their concern that negotiations towards a post 2012 framework are going too slowly.

It is vital that over the course of the next twelve months, governments commit themselves to strong action to achieve the emissions reductions recommended by the IPCC.

"The economic meltdown should not divert us from the fight against climate change," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "It is vital that over the course of the next twelve months, governments commit themselves to strong action to achieve the emissions reductions recommended by the IPCC, at the same time as investing in 'Green Jobs' and providing the necessary financial and technological support to enable developing nations to meet the climate challenge."

Trade unions are arguing that the next agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has to include a just transition framework, such that governments and international organizations integrate employment concerns into their economic and social policy planning for dealing with climate change.

Addressing the closing plenary session on behalf of the ITUC, Bheki Ntshahlinsthalali of COSATU, South Africa, told UN delegates that "trade unions believe that we can repair and rebuild national economies on the basis of a green new deal, which will create wealth, jobs and protect the environment".

"The transition will not be easy," he added. "Change will be painful and the new economy we all want to build cannot leave people aside. Workers and their organizations have to participate in decision making. Social dialogue is a necessity for effectively tackling climate change and social development. It is a tool. Use it to build consensus."

Please read the [ITUC statement to COP14](#).

Please read the [speech of Bheki Ntshahinsthali, Deputy Secretary General of the Congress of South African Trade Unions \(COSATU\)](#)

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