



INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

GENERAL COUNCIL

Washington, 12 - 14 December 2007

Agenda item 8:

Climate Change

The General Council is requested to:

- Review and approve the components of the Special Action Programme outlined in paragraph 24;
 - Endorse the attached statement presented to the 13th UN Climate Change Conference (Bali, Indonesia, 3-14 December 2007);
 - Call upon all ITUC affiliates and Global Unions partners to fully and actively engage in actions for adoption of a comprehensive post-2012 international framework for addressing climate change and the reductions in Greenhouse Gas emissions that are entailed, and for the creation of sustainable employment opportunities through an effective *Green Jobs* strategy.
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1. The Programme of the ITUC adopted at the Vienna Congress called for an end to unsustainable consumption practices, cooperation for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, and an overarching international strategy for sustainable development. Subsequently, the 2nd General Council of the ITUC (Brussels, 20-22 June 2007) held a first discussion specifically devoted to the issue of climate change, which was adopted by the Council as one of the Special Action Programmes for implementation by the ITUC in collaboration with affiliates, GUFs and TUAC. It was agreed to elaborate the programme for further discussion and decision at the 3rd General Council meeting in Washington.

2. This document considers the scientific evidence on climate change, with specific attention to its economic and employment consequences. It summarises trade union work undertaken so far and suggests further action to enable trade unions to meet the challenges of climate change including the elaboration of “just transition” policies to provide sustainable employment. In annex is the Trade Union Statement to the 13th Conference Of Parties (COP13) to the Kyoto Protocol, which is providing the basis for the lobbying work of an 80-strong trade union delegation taking part in the 13th UN Climate Change Conference (Bali, Indonesia, 3-14 December 2007).

Greenhouse Gases (GHGs): The Global Consequences

3. Since 1990, the authoritative reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - the intergovernmental body established by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) – have confirmed a scientific consensus that human activities are contributing to rising levels of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere, capturing infrared radiation from the sun and preventing excess energy from escaping our atmosphere. This has already resulted in global warming of almost 1°C during the last 100 years. According to the 4th IPCC Report, issued in November 2007, without decisive international action the global temperature could rise by between 1.1 to 6.4°C during the 21st century, which would be the fastest rise in 10,000 years. This is

expected, in the absence of remedial actions, to have the following impacts on the global environment:

- a) Rise in the Mean Sea Level: the sea will rise by .28 to .34 metres by 2100, causing major flooding of low-lying areas and other damage;
- b) Climate disruption: total precipitation has already increased, but higher temperatures will mean drier soils for some regions in the summer. Disruptions of normal patterns of precipitation will yield unpredictable occurrences of droughts and floods;
- c) Extreme Weather events and disasters: extreme conditions are already becoming more frequent and climate change will lead to more catastrophic heat waves, floods, droughts, severe storms, and other such events. Responses to them may cause further problems as shifts in current living patterns provoke a wide range of secondary effects that have yet to be assessed adequately;
- d) Food and Water scarcity: food security is already threatened in some regions. Water resources will be affected as precipitation and evaporation patterns change. Two thirds of the world's population is already experiencing some shortage of fresh water and climate change is aggravating the problem. Agriculture infrastructures will be further damaged by rising sea-levels and by extreme weather events;
- e) Regional and Seasonal Warming: some areas will warm much more than others, and climatic zones (and thus ecosystems and agricultural zones) shift towards the poles by 150-550 km. Forests, rangelands and other ecosystems will face new threats. Many will decline or fragment, with many species facing extinction;
- f) Biological and Human Health: greater intensity and duration of heat waves, floods, storms, and other extreme climate events will cause higher levels of cardiovascular, respiratory, and other diseases, injuries and deaths. Food and water-related diseases will increase, as will cholera, salmonellosis and other infections resulting from warmer temperatures, reduced water supplies and proliferating micro-organisms. This will give rise to increases in other diseases not directly related to climate change itself, including malaria and tuberculosis. A long list of other potential health effects includes higher incidences of malnutrition and hunger, diarrhoea, asthma and allergic disorders;
- g) Ecosystem Disturbances: in the longer term, the disruption of ecological systems and natural resources will further interfere with sanitation and other infrastructures, causing social and economic dislocation and exposing more people to diseases transmitted by insects, water, and other factors. These results will not be felt evenly; the poor and disadvantaged tend to be concentrated in ecological and socio-economic systems with the least ability to adapt to climate change. People who live in arid or semi-arid lands, low-lying coastal areas, flood-prone areas, or on small islands are most vulnerable.

Expected impact of climate change on employment and on vulnerable groups

4. It is estimated that the overall costs of climate change (in a "business as usual" scenario) will be equivalent to losing at least 5% of world output each year, now and forever. If a wider range of risks and impacts is taken into account, the estimates of damage could rise to 20% of world output or more. The Stern Review for the UK government on "The Economics of Climate Change" (2006) refers to climate change as "the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen" and warns that "The evidence shows that ignoring climate change will eventually damage economic growth.

Our actions over the coming few decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century. And it will be difficult or impossible to reverse these changes.” By contrast, it is estimated by the Stern Review that the costs of adequate action against climate change – i.e. reducing greenhouse gas emissions to levels that would avert its worst impacts – can be limited to around 1% of world output each year. The inescapable conclusion is that while action to combat climate will certainly be disruptive of some areas of employment, failure to act would have catastrophic consequences for society as a whole and the prospects for sustainable jobs in the world.

5. Disruption of workplaces and industries by climate change is potentially immense as is the dislocation of entire communities, including the separation of workers from their homes and property. Some 25 million environmental refugees have already been created by weather events; according to some predictions this figure could exceed 60 million by the year 2030 as 100,000 km. of coastline is lost to rising sea levels.

6. The additional impact of climate change in terms of ill health, lifestyle deterioration, disruption of food and water supply, and other effects which workers will bear disproportionately are difficult to quantify. Climate change will have considerable consequences for the functioning of government infrastructure and for production in some areas, due to such contingencies as the forced relocation of workplaces. Reports to the secretariat of the UNFCCC by governments from Sub-Saharan Africa indicate that climate change is further weakening infrastructure capability that was already deteriorating due to HIV/AIDS or factors related to poverty. The costs of cleaning up aquifers contaminated by salt water incursion, or the physical destruction caused by unprecedented weather extremes stand to divert scarce resources from meeting other pressing needs.

7. Yet decision-makers have been slow to pay attention to the impacts of climate change on workers. In consequence there is still a lack of adequate analysis of the employment outcomes or of the measures needed to address them. It is clear, however that the effects will not be experienced equally and that more vulnerable groups such as poorer workers, women and youth will suffer disproportionately, as will the poorest countries that are not in a position to bear additional costs for adaptation or mitigation measures. In addition to the massive direct impacts of climate change events, workers will be affected by the resource demands of responses to those events, including disaster relief and the restoration of damage.

The Kyoto Protocol and Beyond

8. During the 1990s, growing awareness of this critical situation led the UN to adopt the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994 followed by the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. The detailed rules for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol require developed countries to reduce their GHG emissions by at least 5% against the baseline of 1990, with target levels specified for each of them over a five-year time frame. The Protocol makes few demands of developing countries under the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities,” recognising that developed countries have historically contributed much more to the problem and should assume the cost of cutting emissions. Developing countries are required only to report on a periodic basis on their efforts to address emissions, and can participate in the Kyoto mechanisms. 176 countries so far have ratified or otherwise approved the Kyoto

Protocol, with the most prominent exceptions being the US and Australia, and it came into force in 2005.

9. The Kyoto Protocol mechanisms contain three market-based implementation mechanisms, known respectively as Emissions Trading (ET), Joint Implementation (JI) and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). These allow the Parties to earn and trade GHG emissions credits through projects implemented either in other developed countries or in developing countries, which can be taken into account in meeting their commitments to reduce emissions. The mechanisms are also supposed to help identify lowest-cost opportunities for reducing emissions and to attract private sector investment in emission reduction efforts. The intent is that developing nations should benefit in terms of technology transfer and investment, especially through the CDM.

10. The Kyoto Protocol only covers the period up to 2012 and negotiations are now beginning on renewal of the current Protocol, or adoption of a new one or of a different treaty to come into force after 2012. There is already much discussion about what any eventual targets should be, how they should be implemented and with what tools, what means of calculating burden sharing should be used, and a series of related and complex issues. There is already growing awareness that developing countries – especially those that have or will become major GHG emitters, such as Brazil, Indonesia, India, China and South Africa, need to be actively involved.

11. The 4th IPCC Report affirmed that, in order to limit the overall average temperature increase to not more than 2°C, it would be necessary to reduce global GHG emissions by 50-85%, relative to their 1990 levels, by the year 2050. It warned policy-makers against basing their decisions on the lowest figures for achieving the 2° C target because of currently inadequate climate feedback information. It further said that it would be necessary to identify national reduction targets to allow the establishment of a mechanism of burden sharing to ensure that costs to countries were imposed on the basis of common responsibility but differentiated ability to pay.

12. The essential challenge in the discussions scheduled to begin this December in Bali will be for all countries to join in a stronger commitment to reduce GHG emissions, bearing in mind the differing capacities of developing countries and their need for international assistance.

“Green Jobs”

13. While the costs of inaction are too immense to contemplate, it has to be recognised that workers will also be affected by measures to combat climate change through market or regulatory measures including the use of new technologies or the reorganisation of social and economic activities. Three quarters of greenhouse gas emissions come from manufacturing industry, energy production and supply and the transportation and construction sectors, all concentrated in the industrialised countries.

14. Interventions to reduce climate change will have particular impact on these sectors and the workers within them. This points to the need for programmes to support workers that would be displaced by climate change itself or by mitigation measures, through compensation, retraining, re-employment and re-location, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable workers including women.

15. Estimates of job losses in one sector or region have to be weighed against gains in employment – potential or real - in others. Current global estimates show a possible net gain in employment overall, at the same time as considerable losses in specific sectors or regions. While a reduction in extraction and the use of fossil fuels will result in job losses in the sectors concerned, other jobs will be created in the area of the construction and installation of new building designs, insulation, heat and power systems and increased “end use” efficiency. Considerable employment shifts can be expected in the transportation industry, as the demand for more efficient passenger vehicles and public transportation increases. Pollution control, better waste management and recycling are already job growth areas.

16. The potential net employment gains could be increased through “just employment” transition programmes emphasising what have been termed “*Green Jobs*”. Global Unions have produced case studies to show how institutional, national and sector frameworks for greening of workplaces and changing the personal energy consumption of workers can yield real improvement at the same time as positive net employment impacts. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has coordinated with EU governments and others the production of a landmark study showing possible pathways for change in specific sectors, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, health, infrastructure, energy, transport, manufacturing and construction.

17. At the time of writing, UNEP was engaged in the production of a report entitled “*GREEN JOBS: Can the Transition to Environmental Sustainability Spur New Kinds and Higher Levels of Employment?*”. The report was initiated following discussions at a meeting of a Global Unions delegation with the UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos in January 2007. It is being developed in consultation with the ILO and with a strong trade union input. A further discussion of the themes it raises is anticipated at the next WEF meeting in January 2008.

Moving Forward with Trade Union Action

18. Over the past decade and a half, trade unions have become increasingly involved in climate change issues. On the basis of its involvement in the preparations for, and at, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) and then at the 1993 Trade Union Conference, “From Rio to the Workplace”, the international union movement called for global solidarity on the increase in global temperatures and committed itself to a campaign to involve workers and trade unions in decision-making on climate change. Over the years the international trade union movement became heavily involved in the annual meetings of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development where international discussions took place of how to tackle sustainable development problems, including climate change. At the heart of trade union concerns was that economic and production decisions continued to be made in isolation from fundamental environmental and social issues.

19. At the UN it required more than a decade for trade unions to obtain acceptance that social factors were one of the three pillars intrinsic to sustainable development, along with environmental and economic factors. This formal recognition that social factors formed part of an overarching international strategy for sustainable development took place at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg.

20. Since the 1997 adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, Global Unions have regularly promoted the development of “Just Transition” measures for climate change at UNFCCC and other meetings. For ten years the trade union delegation at the meetings of the UNFCCC has grown in importance and effectiveness. For the first time, this year it achieved official UNFCCC constituency status, suggesting that trade unions’ awareness-raising steps over the years have had a measure of success.

21. This work has led to a new relationship with UNEP, the ILO and the World Health Organisation (WHO). That partnership organised the first *World Assembly for Labour and the Environment* in Nairobi in January 2006 with the participation of 150 trade unionists from around the world, paving the way for a joint training and education programme in three continents over 2007-09 implemented through the Sustainlabour Foundation, a union-linked institute to support trade unions’ sustainable development activities. Following COP12 (Nairobi, November 2006), a Trade Union Ad Hoc Working Group on Climate Change was established for e-mail exchange and occasional meetings, open to all Global Unions affiliates.

22. The challenge now is for trade unions to intensify their action on climate change, both in terms of building support for strong GHG target reduction policies, and convincing governments to adopt effective just transition and *Green Jobs* plans. The trade union position is that the post-2012 Kyoto Protocol needs to incorporate a mechanism to assess and address the impacts on employment on an ongoing basis through strong global and national target setting, with concrete links to adequate financing for employment transition and promotion of *Green Jobs*.

23. Crucial to any credible trade union position on climate change will be support for adequate post-Kyoto GHG reduction targets. At the time of writing, consultations on this matter were still underway in the context of preparation of the trade union statement to COP13, and the outcome of those discussions is indicated in the relevant paragraphs of the attached statement.

24. On this basis, it is proposed that the ITUC Special Action Programme, to be implemented in close coordination with affiliates, GUFs, TUAC, the ETUC and ITUC regional organisations and structures, comprise the following elements:

- i) A comprehensive *Green Jobs* campaign to bring maximum weight to bear on governments and other national and international decision-makers to achieve consensus and active support for a *Green Jobs*-based strategy to tackle climate change. This would include efforts in major international organisations and meetings including the UNFCCC, CSD, UNEP, the ILO, WHO, OECD and G8 Summits, as well as other global fora such as the World Economic Forum and World Social Forum;
- ii) Coordination of, and assistance to, affiliates at national level in lobbying for *Green Jobs* and agreed post-Kyoto targets, together with development assistance from industrialised to developing countries, at forthcoming major international meetings on climate change including COP14 in Poland (1-12 December, 2008), COP15 in Denmark (2009) and beyond. This would entail increased involvement of the ITUC regional organisations and regular reports to the General Council;
- iii) Engaging affiliates further in work to achieve trade union objectives, including strengthening links with their government’s UNFCCC national contact point(s) especially with respect to national communications and reporting;

- iv) Integrating climate change perspectives into other fields of trade union work at all levels which have a bearing on sustainable development, including development and poverty issues, gender equality, occupational health and safety (OHS), trade union rights, and HIV/AIDS;
- v) Introducing a climate change dimension into trade union training and education to raise awareness about, and engagement of, workers in climate change solutions and its specific impacts on women, youth and vulnerable sectors. Cooperation with the Sustainlabour Foundation would be particularly important for this purpose;
- vi) Encouraging affiliates to engage employers in workplace-based GHG reduction activities through collective agreements and other means of social dialogue. Internationally, that could include discussions with the IOE to explore integrated workplace approaches to implement common aims on climate change both nationally and at the ILO, WHO, UNEP and UNAIDS;
- vii) Encouraging unions, governments, employers and civil society to undertake analysis, country-by-country, sector-by-sector, of joint plans of action with periodic evaluation and reporting, promoting the concept of workplace assessments as a major tool for strengthening partnerships and implementation and making optimal use of the Trade Union Sustainable Development Unit (an information and data service reporting on sustainable development indicators);
- viii) Organising high profile events with interested affiliates that can serve as a catalyst for worker and trade union action on climate change. The LO, Denmark and the TUC, Great Britain envisage such events in the near future;
- ix) Establishing 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. Such a Task Force should be chaired by a member of the General Council and function in close contact with other areas of sustainable development work. The task force would be charged with identifying resources to put its work into effect.

25. The General Council is requested to:

- **Review and approve the components of the Special Action Programme outlined in paragraph 24;**
- **Endorse the attached statement presented to the 13th UN Climate Change Conference (Bali, Indonesia, 3-14 December 2007);**
- **Call upon all ITUC affiliates and Global Unions partners to fully and actively engage in actions for adoption of a comprehensive post-2012 international framework for addressing climate change and the reductions in Greenhouse Gas emissions that are entailed, and for the creation of sustainable employment opportunities through an effective *Green Jobs* strategy.**