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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 (ITUC OnLine): 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.

For the full trade union statement for COP14 visit:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/No_45_-_TradeUnions_ClimateChange_COP14.pdf

Concrete proposals for the negotiations can be found at:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/COP14_NegotiatorsBrief_Final.pdf

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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.
<http://www.ituc-csi.org> <<http://www.ituc-csi.org/>> <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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