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Australia: New Emissions Target a Step in the Right Direction

Brussels, 5 May 2009 (ITUC OnLine): The announcement by the government of Australia, the developed world's biggest per capita carbon emitter, of a new target to reduce emissions by 25% of 2000 levels by the year 2020 in the context of a comprehensive global agreement is a significant step in the right direction. While the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned about the need for setting a target for developed countries of at least 25% compared to 1990 levels in order to avert disruptive climate changes, Australia had previously limited itself to between 5% and 15% cuts.

There have also been some positive signs from the Obama Administration and other governments, and the ITUC calls on all governments to raise their commitments in order to conclude a successful agreement and set the global economy on a low carbon path. As governments grapple with the deepening global economic crisis, the ITUC urges them to see measures for recovery as part of the solution.

"In just a couple of years, Australia has come a long way on this critically important issue, and we hope this will help stimulate other countries, particularly the largest carbon emitters, to commit to the ambitious IPCC targets which must be agreed at the Copenhagen Summit. The only possible chance to avert catastrophic climate change is through global agreement around these targets," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

Along with its support for the IPCC emissions targets, the ITUC insists that governments ensure just transition for those whose livelihoods will be affected by the move towards a low-carbon future. Economic stimulus and recovery packages aimed at ending the global economic crisis must help push the world economy onto a low-carbon path, and sufficient ongoing financial support must be available to poorer countries to enable them to take the necessary steps.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries and territories.

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