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G8: Trade Unions Response to Summit Conclusions

Brussels, 10 July 2009 (ITUC OnLine): The Global Unions' statement to the G8 L'Aquila Summit "Putting Jobs and Fairness at the Heart of Recovery: the Role of the G8", called on governments to confront the jobs, climate and development crises, as working families around the world suffer the effects of the errors of the financial elites.

Instead, the summit's economic statement "Responsible Leadership for a Sustainable Future" covers a vast range of issues, failing to prioritise the actions that need to be taken to move out of this triple crisis.

"The commitments on employment and social protection are positive, as is the more extensive role given to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the recognition of the worldwide relevance of the tripartite 'Global Jobs Pact'. But there are no explicit commitments to making the necessary resources available for achieving employment and social protection goals, although the focus on the need to protect the tax base represents a welcome step in this direction," said OECD-TUAC General Secretary John Evans, who represented the ITUC, TUAC and Global Union Federations at the summit.

On climate change, the G8 countries, for the first time, collectively commit to the objective of limiting the rise of temperature to 2° C. But they fail to set out the medium-term objectives or to address how to move to a low-carbon economy in a manner that is fair to workers and communities dependent on resource-intensive sectors. Five months from the UN climate change negotiations in Copenhagen, G8 countries have still to provide the necessary support to secure the engagement of developing countries.

The most significant outcome of the G8 L'Aquila Summit may turn out to be the accountability mechanism, which will be finalised in 2010, alongside the agreement to report on the steps to be taken to meet the Millennium Development Goals. With several G8 countries cutting their development assistance budgets, including Italy, the G8 host, the question is what difference accountability mechanisms will make without the political will to make the resources available?

The L'Aquila Summit is most probably a transitional event, with the greater participation of countries and international organisations marking a shift to a more representative process. Unions have long-called for more inclusive governance of the global economy, with workers having a seat at the table in key fora such as the G20 and the Financial Stability Board. Attention must now turn to the G20 Pittsburgh Summit in September, which unions are demanding must be a summit focused on jobs, reducing inequality and eradicating poverty.

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

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