

ITUC Onlines

Solidarity Must Be One of the Keys to Combating Climate Change

Brussels, 4 November 2009: Over 90% of the people affected by climate change live in developing countries. "This means that the richer countries will have to provide funding so that the poorer ones can adapt to the effects of global warming. Solidarity needs to be one of the keys to the greenhouse gas reductions agreement to come out of the upcoming Climate Summit in Copenhagen," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder, at an event in Barcelona to support a just transition in the face of climate change, organised by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and the Spanish trade union centres UGT and CCOO. Trade unions, which will take part in the Climate Summit as observers, are calling on world leaders to reach an ambitious agreement on greenhouse gas reductions, as recommended by scientists, and to ensure that the agreement covers the principle of a just transition for the most vulnerable workers and communities. The aim is to ensure that the world's most vulnerable workers and communities are not worst hit by the already inevitable consequences of global warming and the implementation of mitigation policies.

"A just transition involves both taking advantage of the opportunities – new sustainable and decent green jobs – and the shift towards the sustainability of existing jobs," underlined Ryder.

The head of the ITUC, which groups more than 300 national trade union organisations throughout the world, insisted that in the same way large sums of money have been allocated to saving major financial institutions from bankruptcy, "the world's governments should not think twice about allocating large sums of money to saving the planet".

Ryder spoke of the international trade union movement's commitment to combating climate change, insisting that "the current fight against global warming is also our fight", and called for recognition of the role of trade unions both in negotiations to save the planet and in the agreement to come out of Copenhagen.

The environment secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, Joël Decaillon, also stressed that solidarity must guide the deal reached in Copenhagen – "a summit that must succeed, because we cannot afford it not to".

Speaking on the situation in Spain, the general secretary of the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), Cándido Méndez, pointed out that the fight against climate change could present "an opportunity to change our model of production, to get out of the crisis and create jobs".

For Ignacio Fernández Toxo, general secretary of the CCOO, the Sustainable Economy Act announced by the Spanish government "although not a panacea, could serve as the framework for a new model of production based on the green economy and the crucial shift towards the sustainability of more traditional jobs".

The minister for the Marine, Rural and the Natural Environment, Elena Espinosa, closed the event, which also counted with the participation of Jordi Hereu, mayor of Barcelona; Francesc Baltasar, the Catalan government's head of the Environment and Housing; the general secretaries of the CCOO and UGT in Catalonia, Joan Carles Gallego and Josep Maria Álvarez; Anabella Rosemberg, head of sustainable development and environment policies at the ITUC; Juan López de Uralde, executive director of Greenpeace España; and Francesc Mateu, director of Intermon Oxfam in Catalonia and Andorra.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 158 countries and territories and has 316 national affiliates. <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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