

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Climate Change – Leaders Must “Go the Extra Distance”

Brussels, 18 December 2009 (ITUC OnLine): With the Copenhagen Climate Summit drawing to a close, the international trade union movement has urged governments to “go the extra distance” to settle their differences and work together to avoid catastrophic climate change.

ITUC President Sharan Burrow addressed the Summit Plenary today, welcoming the support expressed by negotiators for a just transition to a low carbon future, as a key basis for building further support for action. The full text of her remarks follows:

“World leaders here in Copenhagen can today make history and give our children and grandchildren a fighting chance at a stable future.

Working people around the world and their families are watching. They are depending on you to commit to a binding agreement that delivers a habitable planet, decent work and financial support for the most vulnerable; an historic legacy, right here, today in Copenhagen.

Trade unions support the highest ambitions for binding targets in developed countries and ambitious actions in developing nations that must limit the temperature rise to 2 degrees or less. We urge nations to accept transparency, to ensure trust through a global treaty finalized in the first half of 2010. Wealthy nations must lay the foundations for that trust with the finance and technology to kick start low carbon development, the investment to ensure climate resilience, employment and decent work.

Those investments will transform our economies and create millions of new jobs as we rebuild after the devastation of the global financial crisis. We must all take responsibility in this global challenge.

Delegates, we would like to express our satisfaction that this process has recognised the importance of calling for a Just Transition as a driver for decent work and good quality job creation. We thank those Parties that understood the potential of this paragraph for building a broad support for climate action.

The International Trade Union Confederation and its members are expecting and indeed relying on our presidents and prime ministers to put aside their differences, to stand as leaders and go the extra distance to do their fair share. Failure is not an option for our future so it cannot be an option for you. History will judge you on what you do today but more immediately so will we.”

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