

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine
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Madrid Climate Dialogue: Green & Decent jobs, Social Protection & Financial Transactions Tax Must be on RIO+20 Agenda

Madrid/Brussels, 12 April 2011 (ITUC OnLine): International trade union leaders meeting today in Madrid with the UN Panel on Sustainability and business and ngo representatives are calling for decisive and ambitious climate action in the lead-up to the Durban climate summit at the end of this year, and the “RIO+20” meeting in 2012. The union proposals are centred on a tax on financial transactions, a universal social protection floor, doubling the number of green and decent jobs and ensuring a just transition to a greener future.

“This dialogue is a first step in the mobilisation of the trade union movement towards Rio+20,” said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. “We share with the Panel the responsibility of ensuring the Rio Summit delivers on concrete actions which will reduce inequalities, create decent jobs, save the climate and protect the environment.”

“The current economic model is heading us towards more crises, unemployment and environmental degradation”, said Zwelizima Vavi, General Secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). “If we are serious about addressing the vulnerability of poor workers and communities, RIO+20 needs to shift from piecemeal commitments and deliver a universal social protection floor, which will ensure dignified livelihoods for all. The climate negotiations in Durban must support this effort through the protection of the poorest from a climate perspective: with ambition in terms of emission reductions and climate finance”.

At the Madrid meeting, organised by Sustainlabour (<http://www.sustainlabour.org/?lang=en>), trade union leaders are meeting the “Sherpas” of the UN sustainability panel, CEOs from Oxfam, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the International Wind Energy Council, and UN agencies ILO and UNEP.

Further Quotes from labour leaders in Madrid:

“Workers in Brazil and around the world will be proactive in the preparations for the Summit in Brazil, said Artur Henrique, President of CUT Brazil. “Even if we could guarantee our national government commits to prosperity, equality and environmental protection, this will not suffice for ensuring sustainable development: We need to transform the development and growth paradigm, and this can only be done at the international level; the Summit is an opportunity to make it happen”.

“When we look at the situation today in the UK and in Europe, we realise that fiscal consolidation is being used to introduce more unfair taxation systems and undermining public services, said Frances O’Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the UK Trade Union Congress (TUC). “RIO+20 can make a difference in the path towards a new fair and green taxation policy, notably at the international level, through the creation of a Tax on Financial Transactions, or Robin Hood Tax, which could generate revenue for the transition towards a green economy”.

“A green economy based on rights, sustainability principles and decent work can meet the challenge of our societies, said Ambet Yuson, the General Secretary of the Building and Woodworkers International (BWI). “We need the investments for these jobs to be created, and we need the regulations to ensure they are a first step towards the transformation of our societies. A just transition, as the one unions are calling for, need to be based on the transformation of all jobs into sustainable ones, and workers in all sectors, including construction and forestry, will support them.

« The UN Panel has made clear that the inputs from labour leaders are necessary to build a sustainable world and we are glad to convene these dialogue. The inclusion the concrete proposals just mentioned in the Panel's work will influence the capacity of the RIO+20 Summit to decide on 'out of the box' ideas » said Laura Martin, Director of Sustainlabour, who was the organiser of the Madrid Dialogue. “We will maintain our commitment to this process and do our utmost to ensure union's voices are loud and clear in the run up to Durban and RIO+20.

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