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World's citizens ahead of leaders on climate change

Brussels, 8 June 2015 (ITUC OnLine): Governments around the world are lagging behind urgent demands to address climate change, with people voicing overwhelming support – particularly in developing countries – for immediate action, the latest ITUC poll revealed.

Nine out of ten people across the globe are demanding their elected leaders do more to prevent the world's population from being impacted by the effects of man-made global warming, the latest International Trade Union Confederation Frontlines Poll showed.

"As the deadly heatwave in India and the crippling drought in California both show, rich and poor nations alike are affected by climate change," ITUC general secretary Sharan Burrow said. "But with developing countries experiencing more and being less able to respond to climate-related catastrophes, we're hearing the most urgent calls for government action from the Global South."

The ITUC poll asked people from nine countries, representing half the world's GDP, from both the developed and developing world, if and when they thought world leaders needed to act to prevent the world's population from being impacted by climate change.

Key findings include:

- 90 per cent want to see leaders take action to protect the international community from climate change impacts;
- Almost 70 per cent want action from leaders now, without delay;
- Almost 8 out of 10 people want action in the next 12 months or less;
- While almost two-thirds of the developed world want action, the figure is far higher in the developing world at 80 per cent;
- Even in the UK (58 per cent) and the US (55 per cent), the majority are demanding action.

The two countries with the loudest calls for immediate action were the heavily populated island nations of Indonesia (90 per cent) and the Philippines (88 per cent).

"Wealthier countries like the United States emit more emissions per capita than developing countries, but the demand for government action is most urgent from nations like the Philippines which know firsthand the more prevalent extreme weather events the International Panel on Climate Change predicts," Ms Burrow said.

The Philippines had so many typhoons in 2013 that it ran out of letters to name them, including the devastating 'Haiyan', which left 6300 dead and 2000 still missing.

"This could be the future for other nations experiencing a rapidly changing climate."

The ITUC Frontlines Poll also revealed that governments could no longer use their constituents as a reason for inaction, with just four per cent indicating world leaders did not need to act.

Almost two-thirds of those aged 55 years and older wanted immediate action, and just one in 10 of this age group believed inaction from world leaders should continue.

Ms Burrow said: “Politicians who are not prepared to commit to decarbonise our world and save us from the horrors of climate change don’t deserve to be elected.

“This survey proves any pressure for world leaders to continue to sit on their hands is coming from the corporate world and not their people.

“The international community, particularly those most vulnerable, are demanding their governments ignore lobbying from big business and show real leadership on climate change. What is missing are national plans for industrial transformation and just transition.”

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Read the full ITUC Frontlines Poll here <http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-frontlines-poll-special-topic-16271>

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