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Climate Summit in the Balance as Governments Waver on “Just Transition”

Brussels, 3 December 2015 (ITUC OnLine): Governments at the Paris climate summit are putting the future of climate action at risk by removing a commitment to human rights and “Just Transition” to a low carbon future from the mandate for action in the Summit’s conclusions. The Norwegian government has angered trade unions, environment groups and other civil society organisations by moving to delete the pledge to respect rights and engage with workers and their communities in the fight to keep the rise in global temperature below 2 degrees C. Other governments are believed to be backing Norway’s move, which would downgrade the pledge to a hollow reference in the preamble to the Summit conclusions.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said from the Summit, “No matter how much progress is made on the other issues being discussed in Paris, climate action will founder if governments think solutions can simply be imposed on people without fully engaging workers and communities in a common effort for industrial transformation and shaping a future where human rights and workers’ rights are respected. Trade unions everywhere are ready to engage. They are already doing so in their workplaces and industries and we need governments to put this at the centre of actions, not leave it as a vague reference that will mean that people are left out of the operational equation. There may be some in the business world who are happy for people, including their workforce, to be left on the sidelines, but there are many businesses that understand they must collaborate, not dictate.”

The ITUC is calling on the Summit Co-Chairs, Peru’s Manuel Pulgar Vidal and France’s Laurent Fabius, to ensure that the move to delete the pledge is stopped.

“The outcome of this Summit must be relevant to the real world, to real people, and not just satisfy the bureaucratic mind-set of government negotiators who seem to be out of touch with what is already happening and what still needs to be done in factories, farms, offices and other workplaces across the planet. Climate action needs to be done with people, not against them,” said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 333 national affiliates.

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