



The BWI CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES

“Fighting Back for Sustainable Development in Construction and Forestry”

11 – 14 June 2012, Royalty Copacabana Hotel, Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brazil

Declaration on Rio+20 Summit

The first World Earth Summit which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 was considered a milestone for Sustainable Development: for the first time, environmental and development issues were jointly discussed within a broad international framework that emerged into a three pillar concept of Sustainable Development taking into consideration ecological, economic and social sustainability.

Two decades later, there has not been much progress:

- A growth model based on finite, carbon-intensive resources has led to increasing energy prices, depleting resources, and severe damage to the environment and climate in many countries
- In addition financial and economic crisis as well as a structural crisis in equity and justice, including growing inequalities within and between countries as well as an increase in poverty and hunger
- The number of people starving was higher in 2012 than it was in 1992, and at approximately one billion, has reached a record high
- Even though the number of people living in extreme poverty declined in the past decades, it still amounts to approximately 1,4 billion
- The economic crisis is far from over. We have more than 200 million unemployed and young workers and women especially suffer from the crisis.
- Already today, the world population consumes more resources than can be regrown or renewed and continued population growth will exacerbate this situation
- Since the 1992 Rio conference, the world's population has grown from 5,5 to 7 billion, and is on track to increase to more than 9 billion by mid-century

The worldwide transformation towards sustainable development models is by nature a trade union affair, touching the heart of trade union concerns and topics as the multiple crises besides the economic and environmental crisis also includes a social crisis, which expresses in a global employment crisis and a structural crisis of justice.

Taking note that the June 2012 Rio+20 Summit focuses on two themes, on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and on the institutional framework for sustainable development the BWI, as a Global Union Federation, demands from heads of states to make sure that the final declaration sets the path for a sustainable development model which is organised in a socially equitable, just, democratic and transparent manner.

Green Economy

In view of BWI, the current Green Economy concept dominated by UNEP does not adequately address the social dimension but over-emphasizes market based mechanisms and environmental-economic dimensions. Further, it could lead to a green-washing of existing capitalist structures rather than addressing the real causes of the multiple crises. The current path of development is being shaped on the terms of the neoliberal paradigm in which the market imperative overrides society's initiatives to live in harmony with nature.

The BWI global conference on sustainable industries having assembled trade unions from 11-14 June in Rio to engage, debate and share various insights on the challenges in the construction, building materials, wood and forestry sectors and to remain firm in our commitment to a sustainable future.

The BWI conference underlines that environmental friendly activities in forestry and construction have tremendous potential to transform economies and in that way improve climate protection, create new employment, transform existing production and consumption patterns and increase sustainability of society, labour and environment. In order to make use of the great potential in forestry and construction, government policies and finance mechanisms have to be organised in a manner so that they are accessible to the vast majority of people.

Workers are unanimous in their view that a transition to a low-carbon economy has to be just (Just transition) and driven by democratic governments with strong public regulations. Trade unions in the construction and forestry sectors in the various countries must at the same time embark on a rigorous campaign and develop policies to ensure that green jobs become sustainable decent jobs. Campaigns with mass mobilisations require labour to unite with the rest of civil society and play a leading role in developing public policy alternatives so that the movement to a Just Transition is given an impetuou.

Institutional Framework on Sustainable Development

The current global governance structures for Sustainable Development are not able to meet challenges with regards to sustainable development in the forestry and construction sector. Especially UNEP and the Commission for Sustainable Development have failed to adequately address the social dimension of Sustainable Development. BWI supports a governance structure inclusive of civil society and trade union for sustainable development which is more responsive to social dimension, e.g. decent work, employment and poverty reduction.

What do we expect from heads of states in Rio+20?

1. Scale up International Funding for Sustainable Development including Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) as one major source.
2. Governments should review the public procurement contract policies to include social, Labor and environmental clauses.
3. Define Green Jobs as Decent Jobs that offer adequate wages, safe and healthy working conditions that excludes hazardous chemicals such as asbestos, recognize formal Labor contracts, provide reasonable career prospects and worker rights.
4. Include Labor Standards as one of the criteria for certification of Green Buildings.
5. Scaling-up and upgrading of existing skills to new skills training in the light of new patterns of technology and material use, especially for migrant workers, women and youth.
6. Use forest certification systems as a tool for achieving workers' rights to self organization and bargaining and in addition work towards strengthening compliance of social safeguards in REDD+ and the VPA/FLEGT Initiatives in the Wood and Forest Sector.
7. Mega-sporting events should be regionalized to reduce the carbon footprint of the event and ensure that it meets the sporting needs of the nation instead of the financial imperatives of FIFA and its commercial partners.
8. Governments should introduce legally binding rules for multinational companies that respect human and trade union rights and are obliged to social and environmental responsibility in their activities.
9. Governments must promote social dialogue which enables the transformation to a low-carbon economy to effectively achieve sustainable development and decent work.
10. We expect from the governments a renewed political commitment at Rio+20 Conference in 2012 for a sustainable development and concrete actions to reduce inequalities and promote decent jobs in the backdrop of climate change.