

**International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)  
Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG)**

**CTUG submission to the 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government  
Meeting (CHOGM)**

**(Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 27-29 November 2009):**

**“TRADE UNION PARTNERSHIP FOR A MORE EQUITABLE AND  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH DECENT WORK”**

**Introduction – Tackling the Crisis**

1. The Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG) represents over 30 million workers in 51 of the 53 Commonwealth countries. We submit this statement to the 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in order to defend and advance the interests of all workers and people in the Commonwealth. The CTUG calls on Commonwealth Leaders to follow the recommendations herein and to adopt the requisite decisions at their Port of Spain summit in November 2009.
2. The CTUG supports strongly the successful development of intergovernmental cooperation through the Commonwealth in order to attain democracy, human rights and decent work in all its countries. In honouring the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the modern Commonwealth, the CTUG calls on Commonwealth leaders to make this unique institution play a greater role in achieving socially equitable and sustainable development for all – a message channelling the principles of equality, consensus and cooperation of the 1949 London Declaration. The CTUG believes strongly in the institutions of the Commonwealth and we call on Commonwealth leaders to devote resources to, and increase the political priority given to the work of those institutions.
3. The Commonwealth countries as well as the rest of the global community are feeling the impact of recession that has extended across industrialised, emerging and developing countries. Global growth is declining for the first time since World War II, international trade and exports are dropping, unemployment has increased by 39-59 million people worldwide since 2007, more than 200 million workers have been pushed into extreme poverty and the economic crisis precipitated by greed and deregulation in the financial sector stands to create greater inequality among the innocent victims of the crisis – the workers of the Commonwealth. **The need to put people first has never been more pivotal. We have an unprecedented chance to start building a new just, progressive globalisation, with decent and sustainable jobs at the centre and a financial system that serves the real economy and the concerns and needs of working people.**
4. The road to recovery from the global financial and economic crisis and from the complete failure of unregulated capitalism will be long. In order to avoid future crises, the CHOGM should commit to a reform of the global economic governance system, including the IMF, the OECD, the WTO and the World Bank, to reverse decades of increasing inequality. **The CTUG strongly urges the Heads of Government to endorse the ILO Global Jobs Pact, adopted at the ILO Crisis Summit in June 2009, to ensure that employment and social protection are put at the heart of economic recovery efforts. Key elements of an international recovery programme are needed: economic stimulus, regulation of financial markets, action on tax havens, counter-cyclical economic activity and commitment to mitigate and adapt to climate change.** This requires multilateral cooperation and the CHOGM should support enhanced international coordination to stimulate growth and job creation.

## Strengthening Democracy through Tripartite Consultation

5. Free, independent and representative trade unions give working people a say in their own futures. Consultation of trade unions and of representative employers' organisations must be increased and made more effective. **The CTUG calls for the Heads of Government to mandate the Commonwealth Secretariat to monitor progress towards the universal ratification by all Commonwealth countries of ILO Convention 144 on Tripartite Consultation and to report to the next CHOGM in 2011; and Commonwealth Member States to invite and involve tripartite constituents in the preparation of Commonwealth meetings.**
6. Equivalent structures to build tripartism at the Commonwealth level are needed in a process of reinforcing the priorities given to decent work and job creation by Commonwealth governments. The Commonwealth's annual intergovernmental cooperation on Finance, Environment, Legal, Education and Women Ministers is insufficient. **The CHOGM should host an annual forum of Commonwealth Labour Ministers, organised on a tripartite basis.**

## Human and Trade Union Rights

7. Human rights are under severe attack in an unacceptably large number of Commonwealth countries. The CHOGM must decide upon effective measures to promote reform and change in Commonwealth member countries that violate human rights and undermine democracy. The CTUG will itself publish a biennial report on violations of trade union rights in the Commonwealth, ahead of each CHOGM.
8. Serious tensions, growing militancy and threats of war and terrorism are a commonplace on too many Commonwealth borders. The Commonwealth must take a much stronger stance, a more effective role in building and achieving peace between Commonwealth members.
9. Among the most essential human rights are the rights of workers. All members of the ILO should have ratified the eight fundamental Conventions of the ILO<sup>1</sup>, yet such is far from the case in a range of Commonwealth countries. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to establish a target for all Commonwealth governments to ratify all eight core labour standards by 2015, to undertake biennial reviews of progress towards that objective and to publish the results of their reviews.**

## Sustainable Development, Environment and Public Health

10. The Commonwealth must become a positive symbol of sustainable development, whereby social and environmental issues are integrated into economic planning and where social impacts are understood and addressed as part of decision making, at all levels.
11. One of the greatest challenges for the Commonwealth will take place a few weeks after the CHOGM – the UNFCCC 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen. **Trade unions of the Commonwealth are committed to reach a fair and ambitious agreement in Copenhagen (7-18 December 2009) that will limit the global temperature rise to no more than 2°C – and we demand nothing less of our governments.** Consistent with this fundamental objective, trade unions urge the CHOGM to follow the IPCC scenario for reducing global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 85% lower than their 1990 levels by the year 2050 and emphasise the need for interim targets for this to be achieved, including a corresponding reduction of at least 25%-40% by developed countries by 2020 below 1990 levels.
12. **The CHOGM can lay the foundation to consult on, plan and implement a Commonwealth 'just transition' strategy, aimed at protecting the most vulnerable from climate change risks**

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of forced or compulsory labour and child labour; equal remuneration, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

**and from the consequences of climate change adaptation or mitigation measures through socially responsible and green investment, low carbon development strategies, and by providing decent work and social protection.** These 'transitional' strategies must also include provision for consultation with trade unions, business and civil society, skills development schemes, and economic diversification in cooperating towards a more equitable and sustainable future for the Commonwealth Member States and our societies. In particular Commonwealth Member States must better predict employment impacts due to change and to set up 'just transition' measures to ensure re-training and re-employment of workers. They must combine this with the promotion of green jobs to enhance and strengthen climate change reduction strategies.

13. The CTUG urges the industrialised countries of the Commonwealth to provide financial and scientific support to the poorest countries of the Commonwealth to facilitate the challenges of climate change, including through the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund. **Trade unions warn that efforts to deal with climate change could also deepen social injustice.** The CHOGM should therefore seize the opportunity to rebuild national economies on the basis of social and environmentally-responsible investment that can create new, decent, green jobs, support sustainable development, stimulate economic growth, and reduce GHG emissions.
14. The small island developing countries of the Commonwealth face particular problems from the impact of climate change on their shores, exacerbating the already grave natural disasters in the form of increased incidence of hurricanes, tropical storms and through rising sea-levels. **The CHOGM must create structures that can deliver rapid solidarity assistance in the event of natural catastrophes and assist countries to deal with the challenges of employment transition to a more sustainable economy.**
15. HIV/AIDS continues to menace the future of Commonwealth countries, its people and their health. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to adopt and follow the ILO Code of Conduct on HIV/AIDS by 2015 and to urge G8 States to meet up with their promises about HIV and AIDS.**

### **Decent work and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

16. The progress registered towards meeting the MDGs and in tackling many of the root causes of poverty is being endangered because of the global economic crisis. Ten years of progress has been undone in the last six months. The key to the future is to invest in people – in their access to justice, to labour protection, to education, to health care, to safe and nutritious food and to clean water. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to publish a biennial stock-taking of progress towards attaining the MDGs for each developing country in the Commonwealth.** Member States must be encouraged to adhere to the UN National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) process for reporting on progress and to promote such strategies in combination with the development of the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP).
17. Decent work is recognised by the United Nations as central to poverty alleviation and should be placed at the core of social and economic policy development. Yet currently, decent work and job security are increasingly threatened in many Commonwealth countries. Many workers once employed in formal jobs are being pushed into informal and unprotected work and millions more stand to lose their jobs because of the global recession. To counteract these trends, governments must bring work within a legal framework where workers' rights can be enforced, with enhanced priority to ensuring labour inspectorates are effective. **The CHOGM should establish a fund for capacity enhancement activities by trade unions, covering inter alia workers in informal work and export processing zones and linked to ILO assistance and technological cooperation.**
18. Discrimination - whether involving gender, race, caste, age, or of whatever form – is a blight affecting all Commonwealth countries. Achieving gender equality depends on equal rights of inheritance, land ownership, workers' rights, wages, property rights, and access to banks and

financial institutions. It requires determined governments to tackle the spread of the unprotected economy where a great majority of women, children, young people and racial minorities continue to be exploited. **The CTUG calls on Commonwealth governments to promote decent work policies and targets that can make a difference in the fight against discrimination**, and to monitor progress regularly at Commonwealth level.

19. Redistributive taxation is required to provide the resources for vital, quality public services – general education, community and family health, and basic utilities, including water, food and sanitation. The CTUG calls on the Heads of Government to fully endorse the need for an effective public sector in attaining development and social cohesion and not to cut public spending in times of economic hardship.
20. Migration is taking place in growing numbers worldwide, including within the Commonwealth, but rarely in a way that provides the best results for the workers and developing countries concerned. The brain drain is depriving many developing countries of vitally needed human resources, while migrant workers too often face discrimination and xenophobia in their countries of destination. Commonwealth leaders should promote an international framework providing structured arrangements for migration, including measures to guarantee equal rights for migrant workers, encourage their full integration, prevent exploitation by employers and protect them against discrimination; and for receiving countries to help the countries of origin to train more skilled people through providing resources for increased access to education and housing.

### **Trade and Development**

21. Very many developing countries in the Commonwealth stand to be affected by Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union (EU). It is vital that dangers to employment be fully anticipated and that adequate policy space be preserved for attaining domestic development priorities. A full impact assessment of the employment repercussions and industrial policy implications is required. **Commonwealth Leaders should establish an observatory to analyse the effects of EPAs and of potential WTO agreements on Commonwealth countries and develop a strategy to mitigate negative economic and employment impacts.**
22. In response to the employment consequences of off-shoring and out-sourcing, more effective international rules to shape globalisation are needed. Many developing countries are competing intensely for export markets and investment and the problems stand to be generalised as competition increases. This would result in a further proliferation of labour rights abuses in export processing zones and repression of workers' rights. It shows the need for governments to guarantee core workers' rights through an effective floor to support labour standards. The CHOGM should agree that the WTO undertake discussions on how to enable trade to result in sustainable social and economic progress, and not the undermining of decent work; and support international instruments that provide clear guidance for acceptable corporate social practices, namely the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration on Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.
23. The United Nations' target for official development assistance (ODA) of 0.7% of GDP must urgently be restated as achievable by all industrialised Commonwealth countries. ODA needs to be oriented towards projects and aid recipients that promote decent work, and complemented by action to reduce the debt burden on developing countries. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to assert and maintain the commitment of all industrialised countries in the Commonwealth to adopt binding timetables to meet the UN aid target, to review biennially their progress towards that end and to publish the results of their review.**