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**TRADE UNION  
CONFEDERATION OF  
THE AMERICAS  
(TUCA)**



**INTERNATIONAL TRADE  
UNION CONFEDERATION  
(ITUC)**

## **DECENT WORK VITAL TO RECONSTRUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF HAITI**

### **Statement to the United Nations International Donors' Conference towards a New Future for Haiti**

New York, 31 March 2010

1. The international trade union movement expresses its deepest sympathy with the victims of the 12 January earthquake at Haiti. It reiterates that decent work must be central to the reconstruction efforts of Haiti and to shape a new development model for Haiti. The International Donors' Conference should allocate ample resources to new sustainable development mechanisms placing workers' rights, social protection and the creation of decent work at the top of the international agenda.
2. The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 312 national trade union centres in 155 countries. Along with its regional organisation (TUCA), the Global Unions Federations (GUF) and our affiliates in Haiti, we fully support the aims of this Conference and call for a strong Outcome Document with pledges that will serve to forge the truly global and sustained international effort for recovery and sustainable development. Trade unions insist that the international community, including the private sector and representative civil society organisations, consult and cooperate with workers' organisations when focusing on the revival of national and local economies and livelihoods as the decent work agenda is a critical component for achieving a comprehensive response strategy for the Haitian people.

*In Haiti, the Confédération des Travailleurs Haïtiens (CTH) is affiliated to ITUC and TUCA. The Confédération nationale des Educateurs d'Haïti (CNEH) is affiliated to Education International (EI) and the Confédération des Travailleurs et Travailleuses des Secteurs Public et Privé (CTSP) is affiliated to Public Services International (PSI)*

## **RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CENTERED ON THE DECENT WORK AGENDA AND GREEN JOBS**

3. Even before the earthquake, Haiti was characterised by a large degree of informal economic activity. Almost 90% of workers in industry and commerce were engaged in the informal economy and the public sector employed just 2% of the active workforce. The majority of workers were extremely poor and many were employed in unskilled, hazardous occupations. Unemployment remains a serious challenge to the development of Haiti. More than 1.5 million workers were without a job before the earthquake, amounting to some 16% of the total population or 54.5% of the work force.

4. Today, that situation has dramatically worsened. Beyond the current and necessary aid programmes, job creation is the response to the Haitian crisis. It is crucial that the international community give priority to bringing men and women back to work as well as safeguarding existing jobs. Job creation programs should centre on skills transfer and capacity development with an aim toward long-term employment. Union-to-union training programs can draw on the skills of experienced trainers to ensure that Haitian men and women workers gain access to a long-term livelihood. All job creation and skills training programs should include women workers and address their complex needs as working mothers raising children during disaster recovery.

5. With regard to maintaining employment, we call on the international community to stress that all employers, whether from the private or public sector and whether foreigners or nationals, need to ensure job security and decent working conditions, including the payment of adequate wages. Key industries in the recovery process should set a new wage standard that meets a family's basic necessities; the Haitian legal minimum wage is not enough. After the earthquake, the cost of living has gone up and wages should be adjusted and applied to the current cost of living. Investing in a dynamic labour market is one of the most effective measures for economic recovery that governments can take and the crisis makes it imperative to implement measures that will keep production levels high in all possible sectors, and improve working conditions for all workers without discrimination.

6. In areas where recovery and reconstruction are underway, special attention should be paid to decent employment through the reconstruction of infrastructure, such as housing, schools, roads and health institutions. Employment-intensive work, public works programmes and Cash for Work programmes have been and remain essential. Temporary and stopgap employment projects must respect internationally recognised labour standards and provide liveable wages, but they are no substitute for a sustainable and durable jobs policy. Particularly in the current phase of emergency it is essential to respect the rights linked with working conditions and health and safety of those workers affected psychologically by the earthquake, as well as that of workers who became disabled.

7. Reconstruction programmes should strive to support worker-to-worker and union-to-union rebuilding projects and strengthen the Haitian unions' relationship with the global organisations shaping the future of the country. Such reconstruction efforts must operate on the basis of full respect for the Haitian Labour Code and ILO Conventions, particularly the fundamental workers' rights, so as to secure the right to a decent wage and to social protection. Haitian workers also need long-term employment that could enable them to shape their future and rebuild their life with their families. Public investments to develop social services and quality, public education, at all levels, are mid- and long-term priorities for Haiti's recovery and sustainable development.

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8. The challenge of development requires innovative and substantial progress towards the introduction of green technologies. The international trade union movement therefore launches a special call to the international donors' community to consider an innovative green jobs agenda for Haiti, as a top priority to dynamise the labour market and help thousands of people to overcome misery and environmental degradation and to build livelihood resilience. Also central to recovery is the re-activation of Haitian agriculture and the rural sector. Through sustainable agricultural programmes Haiti must regain its capacity to produce its own food while at the same time protecting the environment. Before the disaster, more than 1.8 million people received food assistance and over 40% were chronically malnourished and hungry – that has considerably worsened.

9. Social protection, old age pension and cash transfers are urgently required for the many made homeless by the earthquake, particularly the elderly, people with disabilities, single parents and orphaned children as they are particularly vulnerable groups in need of security benefits. However, we believe that the international donor community and the Haitian government should take this opportunity to establish a basic social protection floor in close cooperation with the ILO to serve the millions of workers in precarious, low-income informal and unprotected jobs as well as vulnerable groups in Haiti that are not able to support their families. Social security programmes can work as economic stabilisers and address poverty in the longer term.

10. Social dialogue is also at the heart of a new development in Haiti. Overcoming the current situation requires a genuine Social Pact based on tripartism. Workers' organisations are ready to support that approach and to combine forces with the government, local authorities, employers and the international community.

11. At the heart of Haiti's recovery and development phase lies good governance, requiring the full respect of human and workers' rights, the rule of law, political pluralism, transparent and accountable processes and institutions, and an efficient and effective public sector. The capacity of the national authorities has been severely weakened by the earthquake and many government institutions and buildings have been damaged. A reinforcement of government and local authorities as well as a strengthening of public services, including, quality public education, safe and decent working conditions and health systems, is needed to foster sustainable development and restore socio-economic stability. Investing in people creates the conditions for long-term growth. The Ministry of Labour, in particular, needs the support of the international community to fulfil its essential role in promoting the decent work agenda and creating the preconditions for sustainable development.

#### **FULL CANCELLATION OF HAITI'S INTERNATIONAL DEBT BURDEN**

12. Our organisations are concerned about Haiti's international debt burden and its impact on future rebuilding efforts. We welcome the fact that Haiti received US\$ 1.2 billion in debt cancellation under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) approved by the World Bank and the IMF in June 2009. We further welcome the March 2010 decision by the Inter-American Development Bank to cancel US\$ 479 million of the country's remaining foreign debt, which totalled over US\$ 1 billion at the time of the earthquake.

13. The international trade union movement calls for all debts owed by Haiti to be completely cancelled by the IFIs and other creditor agencies to contribute to the tremendous task of national reconstruction that it faces.

14. It is timely that the Caribbean Development Bank prioritises and develops a comprehensive customised program of support for reconstruction and the establishment of a new sustainable development for Haiti.

#### **IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE FROM THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**

15. In the hours following the earthquake, the international trade union movement launched a solidarity campaign. An international trade union summit will take place 8-9 April 2010 in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic. The purpose is to design a trade union roadmap for the reconstruction and development of Haiti and to define what role trade unions, both international and national, can play in reconstructing and developing a more sustainable society in the coming years. We firmly believe that sustainable social, environmental and economic practices must be the guiding light in defining a path forward.