



## Trade Union Resolution on Labour and Environment

**Meeting** at the 2nd Trade Union Assembly on Labour and Environment, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 11-13 June 2012, organized by Sustainlabour, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), and in the presence of 396 delegates, representing 66 organisations from 56 countries;

**Hoping** that the governments gathered at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will agree on concrete actions that will translate as binding agreements and that will ensure the eradication of poverty, respect for social and trade union rights, and the protection of the environment;

**Realising** that our current profit-driven production and consumption model, identified as the source of rising social inequalities and environmental degradation, must be replaced if a truly sustainable development is to be achieved;

**Aware of** the current and future impact of environmental degradation on the health, incomes, jobs and well-being of workers and communities, especially the poorest among them, as well as on our ability to achieve prosperity, equity and decent work for women and men;

**Deeply concerned with** the impacts of the food and climate crises, the contamination of seas and oceans and land, the accelerating depletion of biodiversity, and urged on by the need to guarantee the universal right to access basic resources, goods and services, such as drinking water, energy and security, and food sovereignty and nutrition within the limits of the earth's resources;

**Recognizing** the risks associated with and the actual repercussions of anthropogenic climate change for life on the planet, the urgent need to act accordingly, and prepared to call for actions that avoid an average temperature rise of over 1.5°C, based on the recommendations contained in the Fifth Assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC);

**Deeply preoccupied with** the data demonstrating that almost 60% of the world's workers are without secure employment and that 75% of the world's population is without social protection, as well as with the statistics on worker health and safety which indicate that, despite under-reporting, every 15 seconds a worker dies because of a work-related illness or accident, that every 15 seconds 160 workers fall victim to a work-place accident, worsened by the neoliberal model that has brought about changes in workplace relations (informal labour, outsourcing, subcontracting, export-processing zones (EPZ), among others), leading to ever-greater precariousness;

**Preoccupied by** the fact that twenty years after the Rio Summit of 1992, the environmental and social crises have worsened and sustainable development negotiations have not led to the compromises that could produce changes in



production and consumption models, but are, rather, laying the regulatory foundations for the commodification and financialisation of the Commons, of nature and its functions;

**Aware of** the fact that the trade union movement is faced with a diversity of situations across the globe with respect to the right to associate, to organise as trade unions and to collective bargaining, to social dialogue and to decent work, and that in many countries the irresponsible behaviour of certain national and multinational businesses and irresponsible structural adjustment policies lead to the violation of worker and trade union rights.

Furthermore, as a result of austerity policies, these rights, which used to be guaranteed, are currently under threat. Convinced, moreover, that combating social dumping is synonymous with protecting the planet;

**Convinced** that the trade union movement plays a decisive role in fighting for an alternative development model for our societies, grounded on peoples' needs, on solidarity, on economic democracy and on a fair distribution of wealth, whereby all citizens can see their human rights fulfilled, whilst ensuring the preservation of our planet for future generations;

**Considering** the progress made by unions at all levels, especially since 2006, during the **1st Trade Union Assembly on Labour and Environment**, exemplified by the collection of best practices showcased during this meeting, and aware of our responsibility to elevate further the degree of trade union participation on these issues beyond current levels.

**We agree that:**

- There is an intrinsic link between social progress, environmental protection and decent work, and that this relationship makes impossible the full realization of one dimension without the other.
- The historical mission of the trade union movement, which is to ensure workers' dignity, freedom and social equality, requires that we embrace the cause of a socially-just transition towards a sustainable development model; a transition that must begin without further delay.
- Public authorities have the responsibility to enact at all relevant levels the principles to which they are internationally committed, and set in motion a rights-based transition that secures equity between and within countries, between generations and across genders.
- It must ensure that the Commons, natural and energy resources are brought and kept under public ownership, securing their public preservation and administration with social control.
- Without democracy and without good governance, meaning transparency, justice, accountability, conflict resolution, the fight against corruption and citizen participation, and without strong regulation, the markets will continue to behave in the socially and environmentally predatory manner that characterises the current economic model



- Social protection is a human right and an essential component of social justice. The right to social security is an economic and social necessity on the road to development and progress.
- The health and the security of workers, their families and their communities, and environmental protection are two sides of the same coin. The trade union movement believes that worker health is a component of the right to social security and a state responsibility. Safe and secure workplaces are therefore essential if we are to move towards decent work and equity and justice which are cornerstones of sustainable development.
- In order for the trade union movement to be a driver of the necessary societal transformation, everything must be done to strengthen trade unions at all levels and to incorporate sustainability issues into trade union strategies.

#### **We ask governments to:**

- Respect and apply the agreed-upon compromises obtained through intergovernmental processes in the field of sustainable development and the environment, such as the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Conventions on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Desertification, as well as the instruments related to the management of chemical products, such as the Rotterdam, Basel and Stockholm Conventions.
- Initiate a profound transformation of all economic sectors, in order to secure the sustainability of the planet, its inhabitants and future generations. This means investing in clean and renewable energies, developing public transport and sustainable mobility, the efficient renovation of building stocks, promoting ecological agriculture, fisheries and forestry models, re-using and recycling waste and promoting life-cycle approaches for goods.
- Elaborate strategies for a Just Transition through public policies that support the transformation of economic activities and that develop new sources of green and decent jobs, with the aim of reaching a result that will be environmentally sustainable, that creates cohesion and social justice, and that guarantees equal opportunities for women and youth.
- Promote the investment of at least 2% of the GDP in sectors that reduce the environmental impact of production and the impacts of natural disasters and that generate green and decent jobs and in Rio, adopt a strategy that pursues the objective of decent jobs for all, with specific references to the eradication of precarious work, the reduction of unemployment and increases in the share of green and decent jobs and gender equality.
- Acknowledge that social protection is a human right, in line with ILO Convention 102 on Social Security (Minimum Standards) and ILO Recommendation 202 on national social protection floors, and provide, facilitate and extend social protection coverage. Benefits should be non-discriminatory, adequate and secure, and the financial sustainability of



social protection schemes must be assured, and benefit from trade union involvement in their design and management. In Rio, governments must commit to the objective of Social Protection for all by 2030, at the very least at the levels of the social protection floor, and allocate the necessary resources to implement it in the poorest countries.

- Adopt a Financial Transactions Tax at the global and regional level whose incomes would partially contribute to the fight against climate change and to the development and regulation of the financial sector.
- Establish an ambitious and legally binding agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in order to prevent irreversible changes to the climate system, commit to reduce emissions in a consistent manner on the basis of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities, and to implement adaptation policies grounded on the needs of communities and which ensure adequate, predictable and additional resources for mitigation, adaptation and capacity-building, democratically-managed by United Nations organisations.
- Systematically link public policies to their climate change impacts, guaranteeing trade union and societal participation throughout the decision-making process.
- Give the ILO a mandate to develop the debate on the just transition with decent work, giving it the space needed to steer sustainable development.
- Guarantee as a minimum, the ratification and/or implementation of all key ILO conventions, as well as conventions 81, 102, 135, 140, 151, 155, 162, 167 and 199, the regulations and norms that deal with social protection, occupational health and safety and the use of chemicals, as well as the relevant recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and ensure that the latter are respected by all national and multinational employers.
- Create new and strengthen existing labour legislation and secure the creation of basic collective bargaining tools globally, requiring workplace access, proper work inspection and democratic participation.
- Develop public policies that guarantee the health and safety of workers, the right to information on the properties and effects of chemical substances, as well as on the elimination, substitution and control of harmful and dangerous substances in the different production and service sectors. We call for a ban on the use and sale of asbestos, endosulfan, paraguat, benzene, cadmium, lead and mercury, among others.
- Stop the privatisation and commodification of the commons and natural resources, and invest in agrarian reform and in public policies that encourage research, the development of new technologies and infrastructures for sustainable food production. The commons must be preserved through public policies, and natural resources must be managed by public bodies and be under societal control.
- Curb partnerships with and transfers or the awarding of concessions to the private sector in strategic sectors, such as energy and transport.



- Develop national taxation policies and programmes which are truly equitable, sustainable and redistributive, including closing all tax havens and tackling tax avoidance and tax arbitrage.
- Guarantee access to and the preservation of on-going quality public education as a universal right and a strategy for sustainable human development.
- Finance, through public funds, scientific research that contributes to the broad objectives of sustainable development, in a democratic manner and through the involvement of society.
- Adopt a set of complementary economic, financial, trade, social and environmental policies, and the corresponding instruments and institutions, to ensure equitable distribution of outcomes.

### **We commit to:**

- Propose alternative economic development models, which incorporates the necessity of reaching well-being and social equity for all, within planetary boundaries,
- Support a Just Transition towards a model which allows to leave the dependency over fossil fuels and propose international, regional, national and local Just Transition agendas, which include sustainable investment programmes, training and education, social protection, dialogue mechanisms and economic diversification policies, and account for young and women workers.
- Make use of our organisational capacity and our experience of past struggles to form a strong, organised global movement in a bid to spur governments and corporations, who are reluctant to act, into taking appropriate measures to tackle and stop climate change.
- Strengthen trade union education and training in order to incorporate issues such as the environment from a class perspective, and support initiatives that seek to strengthen worker capacities on the linkages between environmental problems, the world of work, and the changes in production that these struggles may produce.
- Promote fair and environmentally-sound tax policies, strengthen development cooperation and protect and promote publicly accountable financial institutions and public services in the delivery of environmental protection; and engage with pension funds in which we have board members on the need to increase their investments in sustainable development through emissions reductions, enabling green infrastructure and services with governments backing them with sufficient investments. This will, at the same time, protect the pensions of the workers dependent on these funds.



- Design and strengthen workplace campaigns linked to the efficient use of resources and the inclusion of best environmental practices, and strengthen the debate and union action on ecological agriculture and clean energy production systems.
- Renew the commitment to the improvement of workers' occupational health and safety, including reducing the exposure of workers to chemical substances, physical, social and psychological risk, and respond to new challenges such as nanotechnologies by applying the precautionary principle.
- Negotiate the incorporation of occupational health and environment clauses in collective agreements.
- Create and/or strengthen trade unions and solidarity between workers and work towards ensuring that all workers including precarious, outsourced or informal ones are covered by collective bargaining agreements, for these to become tools for social inclusion and economic, social and environmentally-sustainable development.
- Develop awareness-raising and mobilization campaigns, such as the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers (28th April).
- We are committed to strengthening alliances with social, environmental, peoples', women, indigenous, youth movements and researchers in favour of sustainable development is fundamental.

Rio de Janeiro, 13 June 2012