

A Fair, Ambitious and Binding Agreement Needs to Include a Just Transition for the Workforce

Summary of key trade union priorities presently in the negotiation text

By: Trade Union Organisations

Currently the Long-Term Cooperative Action Non-Papers contain the most important demand from the unions. This is the demands that reflect the commitments and concerns of millions of workers worldwide and they are shared by some government and a large part of civil society.

The large trade union delegation in the Bella Center is working intensively to maintain the specific text aimed at improving the social and labour dimension of current climate change negotiations – we need a just transition for a fast and fair shift to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society.

However, the coming days and hours in Copenhagen will be crucial. The negotiators in the informal working groups in the LCA will be under immense pressure to reach a fair and ambitious outcome document for ministers by the end of the weekend. As key political discussions begin, lines are being drawn up, and many proposals that are currently on the table might be withdrawn in order to reach consensus.

Trade unions have made a commitment to support strong and ambitious greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets in developed countries, combined with effective action for achieving GHG emission reduction or controlled increases to bring about low carbon development in developing countries.

We call for adaptation strategies to be well-funded and to target vulnerable communities, and for research and development and deployment of new green technologies to be scaled up. We believe this is a crucial time to seize the opportunity for repairing and rebuilding national economies on the basis of

socially and environmentally responsible investment that can create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and reduce GHG emissions.

If the outcome agreed in Copenhagen is to send a message of social justice and hope to workers worldwide in order to gain their support for the necessary and far-reaching transformation that is needed, this text on Just Transition must be retained:

Shared vision (Paragraph 9 – Non paper #43):

*“Realising that harmonising sustainable development while addressing climate change and demands for a more equitable utilisation of the global atmospheric resource necessitate a paradigm shift that adjusts global economic growth patterns towards a sustainable climate-resilient development, based on innovative technologies and more sustainable production and consumption, **while ensuring a just transition of the workforce which creates decent work and quality jobs, and seeking the active participation of all stakeholders (...)**”.*

Two other non-papers (response measures and technology transfer) currently on the table mention additional key aspects of the “Just Transition” framework which needs support:

Economic and social consequences of response measures (Paragraph 7 – Non-paper #44)

*[Parties recognise the importance of avoiding and minimising negative impacts of response measures on social and economic sectors, **promoting a gradual and just transition in the most affected sectors, the creation of decent work and quality jobs, and contributing to building new capacities for both production- and service-related jobs.***

Technology transfer (2b, page 19, non-paper 47, “Climate Technology Hub and Corps”):

*“Provide training, information and workforce development programmes to build and/or strengthen domestic capacity in developing countries to identify technology options, make technology choices, and operate, maintain, and adapt technologies, including through **training of trainers and on-the-job technical and vocational training.**”*

Without a specific reference in the negotiation text to training and workforce developments to strengthen capacities, trade unions worry that the indispensable absorption and deployment of new, clean processes and technologies will not happen as quickly as called for by scientists and governments.

Trade unions of the South and the North are urging negotiators to consider the vulnerability of the workforce, be it in Bangladesh, Cook Islands or Denmark. Workers should not lose their livelihoods because of climate change impacts or in the transition to bring down GHG emissions.

We are all conscious of our shared responsibility in reaching a fair, ambitious and binding outcome in Copenhagen. Yet, we believe that references to decent work, training and a just transition for the workforce are essential in creating a broad consensus and mainstreaming social needs in the future planning of climate policies.

For more information, see the Just Transition flyer: <http://bit.ly/33KUm> 