



TRADE UNIONS AT THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE UNFCCC - COP15

7-18 December, 2009 – Copenhagen, Denmark

☞ This report of activities is available at:
http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ITUC_COP15_ITUC_report_final.pdf

Summary Assessment

More than 400 trade unionists participated in activities related to the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, held from the 7th to the 18th December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark and a report on trade union work is to be found in section 1 of this report.

Given that our actions were aimed at achieving an ambitious outcome for both the planet and workers it is very hard to assess the impact of trade union activities in the difficult context described below. However, the trade union delegation did its utmost to push governments in a new direction, and made a clear case for climate action in both developed and developing countries.

Regarding the substantive elements of the Copenhagen outcome, and in the light of the demands the trade union movement made in its statement to COP15, it is fair to say that the conference did not deliver on establishing a legally-binding framework to address climate change in the post-2012 framework, a politically ambitious objective for climate action in the near future or recognition of the social and employment aspects of the fight against climate change.

The Conference at least agreed to renew the mandates of the two working groups dealing with the post-2012 framework (AWG-LCA and AWG-KP) based on certain of the documents elaborated to date (which did not include the draft text on Shared Vision where our Just Transition/Decent Work language was included, but did cover another reference to Just Transition under a “response measures” section).



Photo: Sustainlabour

The “Copenhagen Accord” distributed at the end of the Conference, which was only noted rather than approved as a UNFCCC document and therefore lacks official status, fails to address the key elements contained in the trade union COP15 position statement¹ as detailed in section 2.

In addition, doubts remain about the ability of the negotiating process to digest and recover from such a negative outcome, and the capacity of the negotiators to obtain different national mandates from those that led to the blocking of negotiations in Copenhagen.

1 These key elements comprised the need for

- a legally-binding framework,
- an agreement stating the level of emission reductions to be accomplished by 2020 by developed countries in line with the need for keeping temperature increases below 2°C, requiring a 25-40 percent reduction on the basis of 1990 emission levels, as well as ambitious and measurable actions in major emerging economies.
- a commitment by developed countries to provide sufficient funding for adaptation and mitigation actions in developing countries
- a clear acknowledgement of the need for ensuring social justice in the transition towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy, as defined by the concept of Just Transition

While some reasons for the failure to deliver a legally-binding text can be found in the complexity of the UN negotiating process and the fact that consensus on so many technical issues was difficult to achieve in such a short time frame, the main factors in the surprisingly low level of ambition of the final outcome are to be found in the lack of political leadership of some key players in the negotiations. The lack of ambition in the emission reduction targets pledged by the United States, coupled with a minimalist pledge subject to stringent conditionality for financing adaptation in developing countries, the incapacity of the European Union to move to a target of a 30% reduction in GHG emissions from 1990 levels, and in general the negative position of all developed countries to agreeing on a second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol all reinforced an environment of mistrust and conservatism on the part of the emerging economies. China in particular played a significant role in erasing what remained as ambitious (viz. adopting a maximum 1.5°C degree average increase in temperature as a new objective for the agreement, following recent scientific evidence indicating that irreversible damage might appear after that tipping point) in the last hours of the conference for self-evident reasons: if developed countries would not commit to ambitious targets, all global objectives would have to be accomplished by the efforts of emerging economies as well.

It is clear that the problems in Copenhagen are also symptomatic of other, more structural challenges of the multilateral system, such as the difficulty of abandoning national sovereignties, diversity in the pace and model of growth and development, the increasing role played by emerging economies in the multilateral system, and tensions in the American-Chinese relationship.

Activities organised by trade unions, such as the World of Work (WoW) pavilion, attracted more than 1000 people in a very difficult context. The participation of the labour movement in the peaceful mass demonstration for climate action was very much welcomed by other civil society partners. Civil society's involvement both within and outside the conference faced challenges arising from a disproportionate and disorganised security response. A detailed report and evaluation of activities undertaken in Copenhagen can be found in section 3.

While the follow up to the climate conference is still to be clarified by the UNFCCC, the labour movement must nonetheless maintain momentum and enhance its capacity on climate change in order to make our movement more influential and effective in this process in the years to come. Our initial proposals for further work are to be found in section 4.

Contents

- 1. Background to COP15, trade union priorities and trade union participation (including gender and geographical distribution)**
- 2. Trade union activities at COP15**
- 3. Evaluation of progress**
 - Evaluation of progress on climate change policies and labour issues in the negotiations
 - Evaluation of trade union action
- 4. Follow up and planning for next year**

1. Background to COP15, trade union priorities and trade union participation (including gender and geographical distribution)

Background to COP15

The 15th Session of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP15) was mandated to deliver a new framework for emission reductions and adaptation to climate change that would give continuity to the efforts and commitments of the Kyoto Protocol and include binding commitments based on the common but differentiated responsibilities of the countries negotiating under the Convention.

Throughout the year and starting right after COP14 in Poznan a series of preparatory negotiations took place, aiming at clarifying and sharpening the document to be negotiated in Copenhagen. Unfortunately, none of these managed to make the necessary progress and the prospects for a successful outcome in Copenhagen became more and more faint the closer the meeting came. There were some hopes though that the presence of world leaders in Copenhagen would help “unbundling” key contradictions in the negotiations and provide the new national negotiating mandates that were necessary to finish the meeting with a successful outcome.

The ITUC and its ad-hoc working group on climate change followed all the preparatory meetings closely and

reported in detail on progress regarding substantive issues in the negotiations. Intense lobbying efforts were undertaken in these meetings, aimed at explaining and promoting trade union priorities in the negotiating texts.

The ITUC view before the Summit was that an ambitious and fair agreement was still possible, an assessment that was shared by informed commentators and, indeed, most of the civil society community. For the first time there were also real possibilities for finally achieving an agreement that acknowledged the importance of ensuring a Just Transition and decent work when addressing climate change.

Trade union priorities

The international trade union movement in Copenhagen shared two key objectives: on the one hand, to support efforts leading to an ambitious agreement being reached in COP15, and on the other to ensure that key labour issues were included in these decisions. The complexity of the process, as well as these different aspects of the trade union objectives made it necessary to identify various means of achieving these objectives.

In terms of substance, the ITUC adopted a substantive statement “Trade unions and climate change: Equity, justice and solidarity in the fight against climate change” which covered the most essential aspects of climate change, its relationship with the world of work and the role of trade unions. This statement established the key priorities for the trade union movement in the negotiations and in its relationships with the other relevant actors of climate change decision-making.

The statement is available on the web at the address below, and printed copies are available on demand. <http://climate.ituc-csi.org/documents-.html?lang=en>

Briefly, the ITUC statement says that:

- Addressing climate change is critical to the economic, social and environmental interest of all peoples of the world; therefore unions call on all governments to decide fast on a new binding, fair and ambitious agreement for the post 2012-framework which limits temperature increases to no more than 2°C and paves the way for a global emission reduction of 85% by 2050. The statement refers to the commitment of trade unions to call on developed countries’ governments to commit to medium-term emission reduction targets which enable the general objectives described above, which are of an estimated 25-40% reduction from 1990 levels. It calls on developing countries with the capacity to do so, in particular emerging economies, to take the necessary steps for transition to a low-carbon economy, through the promotion of renewable energies, energy efficiency, capture and storage technologies and avoided deforestation, among others.
- It is time for climate change policy-makers to understand that we need a “Just Transition” and that because of this, the economic transformation cannot be left to the “invisible hand” of the market. Government-driven investments, innovation and skills development, social protection and consultation with social partners (unions and employers) are essential if we want to make change happen. Climate policies must provide an opportunity for restoring hope, repairing and rebuilding national economies on a sustainable basis and creating jobs at the same time as reducing GHG emissions, and this will only happen if public policies are put in place in order to stimulate “green” investment in a way which creates decent work.
- Sufficient public funding needs to be allocated by developed countries to adaptation in developing countries. Social protection schemes, decent work promotion and quality public services as a means for reducing poverty and thus vulnerability to climate change are fundamental.
- Major investments are needed to develop sustainable long-term industrial policies, aimed at retaining and creating decent and “green”/sustainable jobs, “greening” all workplaces and developing and deploying technology.
- Workplace actions are crucial in order to achieve change. Workers and workplaces need pro-active and preventive policies to be put in place regarding adaptation to climate change, as well as the potential impacts of mitigation policies.

The priorities stated above were promoted through active lobbying in the negotiations, campaigning with other civil society organisations, and organising a public trade union space for debates on these topics called

the World of Work pavilion (WoW), among other actions.

In terms of the negotiations, and as a consequence of the evolution of the negotiating texts throughout the year, the trade union priorities translated into three core proposals, sent by affiliates to their governments before the meeting. These elements consisted in asking governments to:

1. *Support an ambitious, binding and fair agreement in Copenhagen, which will set the basis for medium and long term emission reductions and for a sustainable adaptation to the effects of climate change in developing countries.*
2. *Ensure that the new agreement maintains the call for “Just Transition for the workforce which creates decent work and quality jobs” as it appears in the negotiating draft.*
3. *Add a definition of “stakeholders” or “civil society”, following agreed definitions from Agenda 21, as a means for recognising trade unions as relevant stakeholders in this discussion. In “Agenda 21”, trade unions are recognised as one among nine Major Groups which are key in sustainable development decision-making.*

For more information on this, the letter sent to all affiliates by the ITUC is available at:

<http://climate.ituc-csi.org/write-to-your-government-before.html?lang=en>

Global Union Federations participating in Copenhagen adopted and released position papers in line with ITUC policy.

PSI

<http://www.world-psi.org/TemplateEn.cfm?Section=COP15&CONTENTID=23982&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm>

BWI <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?index=2470&Language=EN>

ICEM <http://www.icem.org/en/97-Sustainable-Development-Health-and-Safety/3576-ICEM:-COP-15-Second-Week-Diary-and-Commentary-12-18-December>

IMF <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=21574>

ITF <http://www.itfglobal.org/transport-international/ti37countdown.cfm>

ETUC <http://etuc.org/a/6594>

EMF <http://www.industrialpolicy.eu/EMF/Green-manifesto>

Many trade union centres adopted position papers, and affiliates are invited to submit their statements or links to them in order to enable the ITUC to prepare a historical record of trade union positions.

Trade union participation (including gender and geographical distribution)

The UNFCCC 15th Conference of the Parties was the biggest-ever conference on climate change. As it was generally expected that key decisions were going to be taken in Copenhagen more than 45,000 people registered with the UNFCCC to attend COP15, and even more went to Copenhagen to participate in parallel activities. The international trade union movement considered it fundamental to show the commitment of the labour movement to achieving a fair, ambitious and binding outcome and also to raising the profile of our demands for a “Just Transition” when these decisions were taken, and the ITUC made an open invitation to its affiliates to attend this meeting. The response of ITUC affiliates and Global Union Federations was impressive; as the statistics below confirm, more than 400 trade unionists came to Copenhagen to show in different ways the commitment of the labour movement on climate issues. Of these, 290 registered as part of the official trade union delegation to the COP15 (the difference is to be explained by the restrictions imposed by the UNFCCC Secretariat on civil society observers, as well as the difficulties in obtaining accreditation, or even access to UN premises).

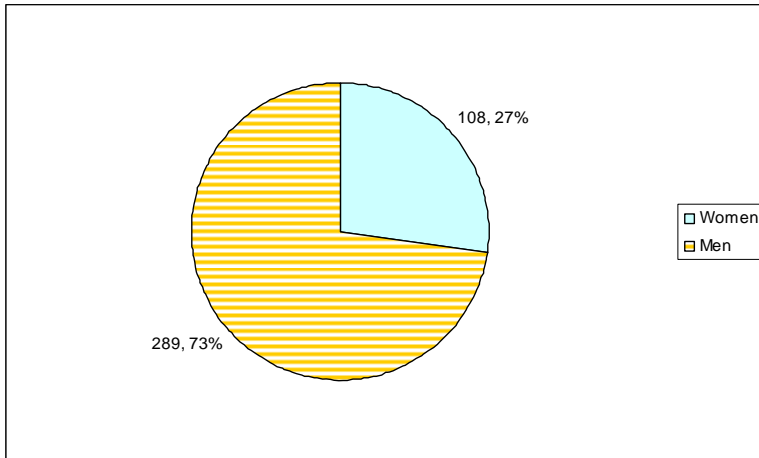
Many of the trade union representatives appear in the list of participants indicated below; others came to participate in the civil society rally and are not named, but all trade union delegates deserve recognition and thanks.

➔ Trade Union delegation in Copenhagen²:

² The chaotic conditions in which the accreditation was undertaken in the UNFCCC makes for us very difficult to assess the final

From this list, it is possible to identify the gender and regional distribution of the trade union delegation. From our calculations, 73% of the trade union delegates were male and 27% female. There is a need to consider measures to be taken before the next conference in order to have a more gender-balanced delegation.

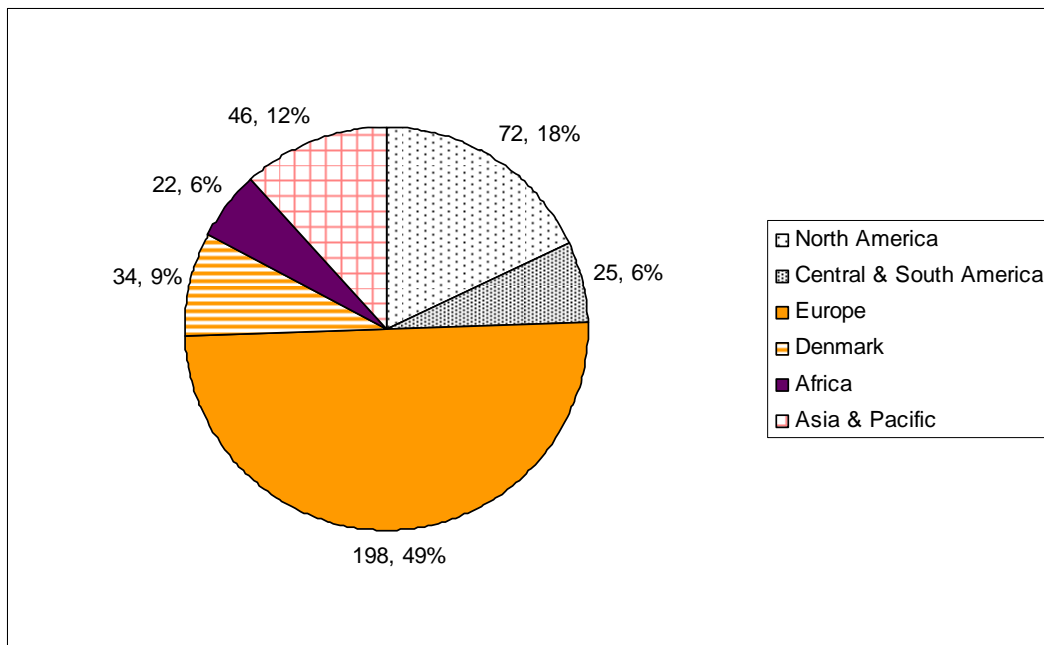
Gender distribution



In terms of regional distribution, and given that the meeting took place in Europe, the number of delegates from that region is predictably predominant (58%). Also to be noted is the increase in North American unions' representation (Canada and US in particular, accounting for 20%) and the efforts made to ensure that Asia, Africa and Latin America were represented by a significantly higher number of representatives than on previous occasions. The ITUC would especially like to thank YS Norway, LO Denmark, Sustainlabour and TUC United Kingdom for supporting developing countries' trade union participation.

It has to be acknowledged though that a fair balance in North/South participation was not achieved, an aspect that indicates the need for internal discussions on innovative ways to address this imbalance (i.e. increased sponsorship for developing countries' unions, etc).

Regional Distribution



number of trade union delegates who could actually gain access to the UN premises. This list only includes delegates who attended the UNFCCC negotiations and/or outside trade union events (WoW pavilion, morning coordination sessions, etc)

The ITUC delegation shared increasing concerns during COP15 at the lack of access to the UN conference centre for civil society as well as the repressive attitude of some elements of the security forces vis-à-vis civil society representatives. The ITUC has been engaging in interactions with the UNFCCC subsequently, aiming at ensuring that events in Copenhagen will not set a precedent.

2. Trade union activities at COP15

Promoting the trade union position on climate change

The trade union statement described in Section 1, "Trade unions and climate change: equity, solidarity and justice in the fight against climate change" was distributed at COP15 to all delegations. The publication is available on demand.

In addition, the ITUC prepared a brief leaflet explaining the concept of Just Transition, aimed at clarifying our proposal, providing examples of policies and making a strong link with the climate negotiations. This flyer is available in numerous languages in our climate website (languages other than Spanish and French are to be found in the English section)

- English <http://climate.ituc-csi.org/what-s-just-transition.html?lang=en>
- Français <http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/01-TransitionFR.pdf>
- Español <http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/01-TransitionES.pdf>
- German <http://climate.ituc-csi.org/what-s-just-transition.html?lang=en>
- Japanese <http://climate.ituc-csi.org/what-s-just-transition.html?lang=en>
- Russian <http://climate.ituc-csi.org/what-s-just-transition.html?lang=en>

Bilateral meetings were organised between the ITUC and many government officials as a result of affiliates' efforts: *(Note to union participants: if you could provide a sentence describing key elements of these meetings, these will be included in the final report)*

The following government representatives were met by an international delegation led by national affiliates and the ITUC: Argentina, Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Japan, Mexico, Nepal, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In addition, several affiliates had bilateral discussions during COP15, including Australia, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Nicaragua, Norway, South Africa, Spain, United States, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In a meeting with the UK Energy and Climate Change Minister, Joan Ruddock MP (16 December 2009), she reported that the UK government was encouraging the EU to announce support for a top-of-the-range cut in CO₂ of 30% by 2020. The Minister also wished to safeguard the ITUC's just transition text in the final agreement³.

This aspect of our work was seriously undermined by the unexpected restrictions imposed on civil society representatives during the second week of the negotiations. As a consequence of these restrictions, several appointments had to be cancelled.

It is to be noted that two governments included the call for Just Transition in their national mandates for COP15, Argentina and Norway. Argentina even raised the importance of including Just Transition in the High Level Plenary (5:39 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9n5W9rrdJw>). This is an objective which should be sought for all government delegations in future meetings.

UNFCCC Secretariat: ITUC delegates participated in a briefing for civil society organisations called by Yvo de Boer, the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, as well as in the briefing organised by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the Chair of the AWG LCA.

Other meetings: ITUC delegates participated in a joint discussion with Climate Justice Now (CJN), indigenous peoples, gender organisations and the Accra caucus.

In addition, the Council of Global Unions (CGU) released a new edition of the CGU magazine in time for COP15: "Getting the World to Work: Green Growth for jobs and social justice".

- Getting the World to Work: Green Growth for jobs and social justice
<http://www.global-unions.org/spip.php?article306>

³ Information provided by TUC UK

Intervening in formal UNFCCC sessions

Trade unions were invited to address several plenaries during the UNFCCC, as follows:

- Opening address to the Conference of the Parties – 7th December 2009

Trade Union speaker: Marie-Louise Knuppert (LO Denmark)

Speech available at: http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/AWGLCA_ITUCopening.pdf

Video: around 3h:04 min http://cop15.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop15/templ/play.php?id_kongresssession=2293&theme=unfccc

- Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

Trade Union speaker: Eugenio del Valle (CROC-Mexico)

Speech available at: http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/SBSTA_ITUC_item3.pdf

Video: around 1h:22 http://cop15.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop15/templ/play.php?id_kongresssession=2313&theme=unfccc

- Closing session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG KP)

Trade Union speaker: Claude Rolin (CSC-Belgium)

Speech available at: http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/AWGKP_ITUC_Closing.pdf

Video: around 22 min http://cop15.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop15/templ/play.php?id_kongresssession=2618&theme=unfccc

- High Level Segment

Trade Union speaker: Sharan Burrow (ITUC President, and ACTU-Australia)

Speech available at: http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/HLS_ITUCClosingRemarks.pdf

Video: around 39 min http://cop15.meta-fusion.com/kongresse/cop15/templ/play.php?id_kongresssession=2721&theme=unfccc

Organising the World of Work (WoW) pavilion

For the first time, the ITUC in cooperation with the host country trade union, LO Denmark, organised a space where trade unions and trade union-related organisations from different regions, sectors and interests were able to present their experiences and share, debate and plan with other actors (governments, social and environmental movements, enterprises, UN and regional agencies) how a new society can be built, a society where climate is protected, where workers and trade unions are integral parts of decision making and where an environmentally friendly and fair sustainable future is no longer an illusion but a reality. In the World of Work (WoW) pavilion a three-day programme of trade union panels, conferences and other activities under the banner “Unions have Solutions” took place from 14-16 December 2009. The programme is available on the ITUC climate website:

- ➔ World of Work (WoW) Pavilion programme
<http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/WoW-Programme30nov.pdf>

The World of Work (WoW) pavilion featured a wide range of events organised by trade unions from around the globe and from different sectors of work. Themes included energy conversion in Japan; green jobs in India; low carbon industrial policies in Europe; women workers and green jobs; climate justice; sustainable transport policies in Spain; challenges for the power generation sector; the role of public services; and many more.

28 workshops were organised and more than 1,000 people attended events in the WoW, which made it one of our key message-drivers of the whole conference.

The presentations made in the WoW pavilion are starting to be posted in the ITUC climate website (<http://climate.ituc-csi.org>)

The ITUC warmly thanks LO Denmark for its support in this initiative. ITUC also conveys thanks to all the organisations which organised events in the WoW pavilion and looks forward to repeating this experience.

ITUC stocktaking meeting and daily caucuses

On Sunday 13th December, mid-way through the negotiations, the ITUC held its usual stock-taking session aimed at informing the delegation about progress made in the first week of negotiations and at strategising for the second week of COP15. The meeting was attended by more than 150 trade unionists. The agenda can be downloaded from the ITUC climate website
http://climate.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ITUC_COP15_stocktaking_meeting_agenda.pdf

ITUC Official Side Event

The traditional ITUC side event organised within the framework of the official negotiations aimed at presenting trade union proposals to delegates and other civil society participants, as well as screening the recently released video on Trade Unions and Climate Change, was cancelled due to the exclusion of civil society representatives from the Bella Center.

Civil society rally

On Saturday 12th December, many trade union organisations responded to the call by civil society to join a demonstration calling for a fair, ambitious and binding agreement in Copenhagen. Trade unions marched under the banner “unions have solutions” and received a warm welcome by other civil society partners. Particularly noteworthy in this context was the support of the Belgian trade unions FGTB and CSC, which provided much logistical support as well as an energetic and dynamic section of the demonstration. Photos from the rally can be found at:

<http://picasaweb.google.es/Sustainlabour/2009ClimateDayActionCopenhagen#>

Videos

ITUC and Sustainlabour released four short videos showing union's commitment to fight against climate change. 41 trade unions from developed and developing countries participated in their preparation. We invite you to watch them and share them with others in the union movement and elsewhere.

Key messages:

Unions have historically for a better world, it is time to get involved on climate change

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvTrg1nkjdA>

Climate change is a global problem, trade unions are part of the solution

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajT4NzMhNYI>

Unions commit to very concrete steps to flight climate change

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvsZwfasPrY>

The fight against climate change will have to be a fair one

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1ipyS1bZhA>

Visual material on trade unions and climate change available

Sustainlabour, with the assistance of the ITUC produced a 20-minute video, “Time to tackle climate change”, showcasing trade unions’ concrete experiences, challenges, opportunities, and commitments for action on climate change.

Preview it here: <http://www.sustainlabour.org/video>

The high quality version of the video is available for your training work and conferences on request.

The video features the following union experiences:

GERMANY (Confederation of German Trade Unions, DGB) - Trade unions retrofit buildings through implementation of energy saving and energy efficient measures and a programme that could lead to the creation of up to 200,000 jobs.

USA (US United Steelworkers Union and many others) - Only a month after Obama is sworn in as President, over 2,700 labour, business and environmental representatives gather at Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. to demand Green Jobs and to call for a green economy

UK (Trade Union Congress, TUC) - GreenWorkplace project - Training for Union Environmental Representatives in reducing emissions and energy use in the workplace.

SPAIN – Unions promote sustainable public transport solutions, car pooling, bicycle lane construction and rentals, and bus shelter solar panel installation.

Establishment of tripartite social dialogue platform between unions, governments and employers on climate change

KENYA (Building and Woodworkers Union, BWI) - Trade union assists workers who have lost their jobs at a paper mill to become reforestation workers

ARGENTINA (UOCRA) - New skills for a new future – Unions provide training for over 500 workers on use and application of renewable energy technologies.

INDIA (Self-Employed Women’s Association, SEWA)

Bringing energy to rural women and reducing rates of deforestation through the use of biogas stoves

Webtools and press coverage

Efforts were made to increase the media coverage of our activities. Below are just a few examples:

Outreach: The Outreach magazine was a daily publication distributed in the Bella Center outside the negotiating rooms presenting news to leaders, governments and NGOs about active approaches and initiatives by many organisations. Trade unions joined this initiative thanks to the support of Sustainlabour. You can read all the trade union articles at <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/index.php?id=735>

Fresh air center: This space, created by the tcktcktck campaign, brought together bloggers from all over the world and provided different organisations with the opportunity to brief them on their priorities. Trade unions obtained a slot for explaining their priorities in the negotiation. The briefing is available at: <http://live.tcktcktck.org/ngo-voices/fresh-air-blogger-briefing-sustainlabourinternational-trade-union-confederation>

Several members of the trade union delegation wrote their own blogs or participated in the ITUC ones. Here are a few links

ITUC (in English, Spanish and French)

<http://climate.ituc-csi.org/-blog-.html?lang=en>

AFL CIO

<http://blog.aflcio.org/2009/12/07/us-unions-join-climate-change-talks-in-copenhagen/>

CCOO

<http://blog.ccoo.es/sindicalismo-y-medio-ambiente>

DGB

<http://dgb-klimablog.blogspot.com>

TUC

<http://www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/2009/12/copenhagen-diary-blogging-off/>

ACTU

<http://www.actu.asn.au/Media/Speechesandopinion/SharanBurrowDiaryfromCopenhagen171209.aspx>

YS

[http://ys.no/kunder/ys/cms.nsf/\\$all/9CEC46B629B1AA48C1257682004FE2BE?open](http://ys.no/kunder/ys/cms.nsf/$all/9CEC46B629B1AA48C1257682004FE2BE?open)

ACV / CSC

<http://ACVKopenhagen.blogspot.com> and <http://CSC-Copenhagen.blogspot.com>

CUPE

<http://cupe.ca/copenhagen-2009>

EMF

<http://www.industrialpolicy.eu/>

Some media posts:

Sydney Morning Herald: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-deal-criticised-by-trade-unions-and-green-groups-20091219-l6fu.html>

Bizjournal: http://www.bizjournals.com/prnewswire/press_releases/Ontario/2009/12/17/TO718

Le Monde: http://www.lemonde.fr/le-rechauffement-climatique/panorama/2009/12/17/nicolas-sarkozy-n-a-pas-toutes-les-cartes-en-main_1282380_1270066_11757.html

Libération: <http://copenhague.blogs.liberation.fr/climat/2009/12/tout-est-l%C3%A0-pour-un-sommet-passionnant.html>

Scoop: <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0912/S00485.htm>

Tribuna del Bio-Bio http://www.tribunadelbiobio.cl/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3129&Itemid=85

Het Nieuwsblad: http://www.nieuwsblad.be/article/detail.aspx?articleid=DMF20091213_018

L'Humanité: <http://www.humanite.fr/article2757264,2757264>

In these times: http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/5297/labor_seeing_green_after_the_climate_talks/

Truthout: <http://www.truthout.org/unions-call-science-based-reductions-greenhouse-gases56133>

Photos

Photos by our delegation can be found in the following Picasa albums:

Sustainlabour: <http://picasaweb.google.es/Sustainlabour/COP15Copenhagen02#>

Bob Baugh: <http://picasaweb.google.com/bobbablue/ITUCCOP15#>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/bobbablue/CopenhagenCOP15#>

3. Evaluation of progress

Evaluation of progress on climate change policies and labour issues in the negotiations

Overall, the official outcomes of the Copenhagen meeting were disappointing and insubstantial. No binding or ambitious outcome emerged from COP15; no target for emission reductions was adopted, and only short term financial needs were addressed; and no references to trade union demands appeared in the adopted texts.

Official COP Decisions

The Conference of the Parties adopted only one substantive decision⁴, which basically extended the mandate of the Ad Hoc Working Groups on Long Term Cooperative Action (AWG LCA) and on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG KP) which were supposed to conclude their work in Copenhagen, but instead were asked to function until the 16th Conference of the Parties, to be held in Cancún, Mexico (29 November – 10 December 2010). By means of this decision, the COP took as a basis for future negotiation the documents presented by the AWG LCA when it concluded its work at COP15⁵.

Unfortunately, the AWG LCA did not put forward any text proposal on the “Shared Vision” section where our proposals on Just Transition had been included. At the time of writing, it was unclear whether the new Chair and Co-chair of the AWG-LCA would use as a basis for discussion on Shared Vision the document originally drafted by the former Chair, Michael Zammit Cutajar and amended by Parties or if they would start negotiating this section from the beginning once again.

References to Just Transition and Decent Work were maintained in the drafts submitted for the section on Response measures, and can be found at: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/awglca8/eng/l07a07.pdf>

References to workforce development and vocational training were maintained in the section on Technology Transfer, and can be found at: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/awglca8/eng/l07a03.pdf>

It is important to highlight that during the time the AWG LCA was functioning, the efforts made by the trade union movement succeeded in convincing governments to support our references to Just Transition and Decent Work in the Shared Vision section, with such unprecedentedly open support extending to that of the G77, EU and the US. This success risks being ignored by the negotiators of new drafts if our pressure is not maintained.

Copenhagen Accord

In the last days of the COP, Governments were asked to take decisions on the “barriers” identified by negotiators which appeared in the documents tabled by the AWGs (i.e. the level of emission reduction for Annex I countries; financial needs; the continuity or otherwise of the Kyoto Protocol; IPRs; and Trade, among others). Rather than doing this, Leaders, in particular those from the US and the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) countries, ultimately preferred to draft a new, far briefer document entitled the Copenhagen Accord. That draft was supported by many but not all countries and did not attain consensus in the Plenary. It was therefore not adopted by the COP and its legal value is uncertain.

By comparison to the trade union objectives described in section 1 (to support an ambitious agreement in COP15, and to ensure that key labour issues were included in the decisions), the Copenhagen Accord is weak. Many analyses of its content can be consulted online⁶, but at this juncture the ITUC’s view is that trade union efforts need to be focused on the UNFCCC official documents.

⁴ Other technical decisions were also adopted but do not relate to the post-2012 framework

⁵ These documents cover the areas of adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity building and mitigation (on emission reduction by developing countries, forestry, consequences of response measures, mechanisms for reducing emissions, sectoral approaches on agriculture), available at: http://unfccc.int/meetings/ad_hoc_working_groups/lca/items/5243.php The groups preparing documents on Shared Vision and on Mitigation in developed countries did not manage to present any draft.

⁶ TWN analysis of the Copenhagen Accord: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title2/climate/info.service/2010/climate20100103.htm>

US CAN <http://www.usclimatenetwork.org/policy/understanding-the-copenhagen-accord>

The Copenhagen Accord introduced the concept of a Technology Mechanism which should be defined in the near future. While this is a key component of any climate change agreement, the lack of comprehensive support for the Accord is an indication of the need to emphasise our work on the technology track under the AWG LCA.

Evaluation of trade union actions

While it is a very difficult exercise to separate an assessment of trade union actions from the overall outcomes of the conference, there is a need to identify successes and weaknesses of trade union activities in order to improve our future impact and capacities both in this process and on climate change policies in general.

In terms of the negotiations, it can be concluded that the two-year lobbying efforts undertaken by the ITUC, its affiliates and Global Unions after COP13 proved to be effective. The drafts emerging from the negotiations in Copenhagen contained several references to the world of work, including very specific mentions of Just Transition, Decent Work, and workers' training. The fact that these proposals obtained open support from very different delegations (both developed and developing countries, including both outspoken and generally more timid ones) during COP15 demonstrates that achieving a real consensus among governments on including labour issues in the next agreement is possible. It has to be said though that changes in the scope, detail and ambition of the future agreement might lead to the omission of our proposals. There is a need to maintain pressure at different levels: on the one hand, to track the evolution of the UNFCCC negotiations and on the other to strengthen our pressures at the national level through active lobbying by our affiliates in the run up to COP16.

Trade unions also made progress in their relationship with other organisations, which is key in mainstreaming our message in other organisations' policies. This is something that might seem self-evident in other fora but took a long time to achieve in the climate negotiations. The strength of our position, which could be considered conservative by some, is its consolidated support by a very diverse group of trade union organisations, and many groups very active in this process recognised that in various ways. Trade unions were invited to join almost all civil society platforms (which we did not necessarily accept to do, but which remains significant of itself as a barometer of the recognition it indicates of trade unions' position), the press started to recognise our presence and several media mentioned our work, and many organisations actively participated in our World of Work pavilion, which far from separating us from civil society became a space for dialogue and exchange with NGOs, government representatives and employer organisations.

While there is still a need to strengthen coherence between trade union national positions on climate change and those taken internationally, overall, trade union participation in COP15 showed real improvement in the way we influence the process and interact with other actors, as well as how we work as a group.

4. Follow up and planning for next year

2010 must not be allowed to end without the adoption of a new framework for climate change adopted by the UNFCCC. It is true that divergences among countries have never been bigger, but on the other hand governments and influential civil society actors now comprehend much better the size of the challenge. Copenhagen left many more questions than answers, however. Is the UNFCCC process going to survive increasing pressures by the US, UK and others to move the discussion to smaller G20-style negotiations? Is it going to manage the divisions between developing countries? What will be the role of the BASIC countries?

For trade unions, the challenge is maintaining support for ambitious climate action, and financing for climate change policies, in a context where unemployment is expected to remain high; and making the agenda of Just Transition a must when dealing with climate change, and thus getting it recognised in the internationally negotiated and agreed outcome of the UNFCCC.

Regarding the social aspects of climate policies, trade unions have never been closer to obtaining a recognition to Just Transition and Decent Work in a multilateral environmental agreement, but the way ahead remains long. Efforts will have to be scaled up and the commitment of the union movement to climate change action needs to grow.

ITUC priorities for actions at the UNFCCC level for 2010:

- Providing sufficient preparation for and follow-up to UNFCCC meetings. In addition to COP16 in Mexico, four other preparatory meetings are anticipated this year. One is already scheduled in Bonn, early June; the rest are yet to be decided and announced by the UNFCCC Secretariat.

- Organising meetings (high-level as well as expert-level) with the UNFCCC secretariat, key governments and other key actors in the climate process (UNEP, key NGOs, etc) in order to improve the visibility of and support for trade union demands.
- Stepping up public lobbying about “Just Transition” and Decent Work in the UNFCCC and planning for an exploratory meeting with the new elected Chairs of the AWG LCA. An updated version of the JT flyer could be considered as a next step.
- Further building an ITUC position on issues that have become key in the negotiations, such as Finance (including a Financial Transactions Tax). This should go in the sense of defining a transparent financial, economic and social system working for everyone’s benefit and enabling the development of poor countries.

ITUC priorities for other actions on climate change:

- Exploring the possibilities for organising a World of Work (WoW) pavilion at COP16 in Mexico.
- Maintaining active cooperation with Global Unions, providing follow up to activities undertaken with civil society organisations (i.e. GCCA) and maintaining dialogue with other coalitions.
- Exploring possibilities for cooperation with academia and providing follow up to the GURN/ITUC workshop on Employment aspects of climate change, scheduled for 25-26 March 2010.
- Providing affiliates with a platform for lobbying governments on the basis of the agreed trade union statement for COP15, in particular in those countries where unions have an effective relationship with government officials, so as to insist on the need for governments to incorporate ITUC demands in national mandates for negotiation.
- Enhancing coherence between ITUC positions and proposals on climate change and others linked to the current economic crisis or other policy issues dealt in other fora, such as G20, and strongly encourage the insertion of Just Transition/Decent Work wording in climate-related documents.
- Raising media visibility for trade union action on climate change, inter alia through improved contacts between national trade unions and their press counterparts.
- Undertaking capacity building and awareness raising activities for trade unionists, and strengthening cooperation with Sustainlabour, in particular as regards training trade unionists in developing countries.