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Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment
First meeting
Nairobi
15–17 January 2006

Final resolution of the Trade Union Assembly at its first meeting

Background

1. The Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment was held in Nairobi from 15 to 17 January 2006 under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with the support of the United Nations Global Compact and with the collaboration of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (TUAC) and the International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development (Sustainlabour).
2. It brought together over 150 trade union representatives from developing and developed countries, along with environmental and sustainable development experts and representatives of Governments and the United Nations. The Assembly accomplished three missions:
 - (a) It confirmed that the three relevant United Nations bodies were committed to supporting trade union engagement on sustainable development;
 - (b) It confirmed that unions were engaged in practical steps through their activities to advance sustainable development and that they were are committed to extending that work as a priority;
 - (c) It mapped out steps for joint follow-up action for UNEP, ILO and WHO working together.
3. The Assembly thanked UNEP and its staff for making the Assembly possible.

Resolution

1. The Assembly *agreed* on the following objectives:
 - (a) To strengthen the link between poverty reduction, environmental protection and decent work. Decent and secure jobs are essential for people to have a sustainable livelihood. Creating decent and secure jobs is only possible, however, if environmental sustainability is attained: hence the need to embrace the poverty reduction and sustainable development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation through the promotion of decent employment and environmental responsibility. This must also include the mainstreaming of gender issues;

(b) To integrate the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development with a rights-based approach. Fundamental rights of workers such as freedom of association and collective bargaining must be respected if workers and their unions are to be able to engage in strategies for sustainable development. Moreover, human rights must include the universal, equitable, egalitarian and environmentally sound access to basic resources such as water and energy;

(c) To establish effective and democratic governance to ensure sustainable development and, to that end, to reinforce the role of national public authorities, to establish the rules necessary to govern global markets and firms and to ensure both the compliance of business with law and regulations and also their wider accountability and responsibility, with a view to achieving the goals of sustainable development;

(d) To take urgent action on climate change in support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol; to develop new and additional agreements for both developed and developing countries, taking account of common but differentiated responsibilities; to anticipate and minimize the negative effects and maximize the positive effects on employment of mitigation; and to ensure the participation of trade unions in decision-making on climate change strategies;

(e) To implement the Johannesburg goals on chemicals to make industry prove that chemicals used are safe for workers, consumers, communities and the environment; in the context of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, to ensure the substitution of the most dangerous substances; and to ensure concerted global action through the adoption of the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management and its follow-up, and, in addition to promote the finalization and implementation of the European Union regulatory framework for the registration, evaluation and authorization of chemicals, to be known as the REACH system;

(f) To promote sustainable production and consumption patterns through the reinforcement of cleaner production centres and the dissemination and transfer of technology;

(g) To introduce policies for just employment transition as a central feature of environmental protection and to ensure that workers negatively affected by changes are provided with safe and decent employment alternatives;

(h) To enhance the dialogue between labour and management, consultation and negotiation in the workplace on sustainable development, and social dialogue at the sectoral, national and international levels in both public and private sectors, to use appropriate tools to increase social and environmental responsibility and accountability of enterprises through both trade union and multi-stakeholder participation in genuine initiatives and to ensure that corporate social responsibility involves both compliance with law and voluntary initiatives;

(i) To enhance cooperation and coherence between international rules and conventions on environment and sustainable development. This is to be achieved through strengthened cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and related environment, social, labour and health ministries;

(j) To link occupational health to environmental and public health policy and practice; while raising standards of occupational health and safety as an objective in its own right, to reinforce the International Labour Organization conventions and programmes to develop and promote it; to take account of the need for differentiated approaches between developed and developing countries; to use this as a central element of campaigns to fight HIV/AIDS; to prevent worker death, injury and illness from the effects of chemicals or dangerous substances, such as asbestos; and to ensure the right to reproductive health for women and men;

2. To achieve these objectives, the trade union representatives at the Assembly commit themselves to strengthening trade union action on sustainable development and to working:

(a) For the reform of government policies and practice, in particular by facilitating the transition to sustainable production and consumption in workplaces and the introduction of workers' environmental rights and participation;

(b) For the ratification and implementation of key conventions and instruments covering both the environment and the relevant International Labour Organization conventions, while promoting employment and social policies to make decent employment a key part of environmental protection, sustainable development and poverty eradication;

- (c) For the development of capacity-building and training programmes to advance integration of the social economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development, including integrated implementation of the principles of the United Nations Global Compact, recognizing the particular importance of the protection of women;
- (d) For the assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring of initiatives for environmentally safe and sustainable production and consumption, and also for the transfer of clean technology and development of technology assessment at the sectoral level;
- (e) For the more effective application of tools to promote the social and environmental responsibilities of business, including agreed public instruments such as the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as well as, where appropriate, private initiatives such as sustainability reporting through the Global Reporting Initiative, and, where such systems exist, the use of workers' capital in pension funds;
- (f) For the application at the global level of proposals contained in the European Union REACH programme on chemicals to regulate, within the context of the precautionary principle, the responsibility and liability of producers to trace and detect dangerous chemical substances;
- (g) For the negotiation of global framework agreements with companies that incorporate environmental and sustainable development commitments and, where relevant, for the strengthening of the information rights of works councils;
- (h) For the monitoring of Governments' investment and procurement practices and regulation, privatization and land-use policies, so as both to integrate social and environmental objectives and to ensure human rights and equity with respect to access to resources such as water and energy;
- (i) For endeavours, mounted together with civil society allies, to encourage workplace and community action and awareness-raising among the members of trade unions, for example, through dialogue with community stakeholders and with the involvement of Agenda 21 major groups in decision-making;
- (j) For effective prevention and responses to natural and industrial disasters with appropriate environmental legal responsibility;
- (k) For a complete global ban on asbestos use, for its safe handling and disposal in accordance with the decisions of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and for its inclusion in the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and also for the promotion of integrated and workplace-based approaches to fighting HIV/AIDS.

3. The trade union representatives at the Assembly further commit themselves to working for increased trade union awareness at all levels on these issues in their own organizations worldwide, with a view to the adoption of policy and implementation plans for local, national and international action on the outcomes of this Assembly and to integrate this work at the sectoral level. They recommend that this global assembly is followed up regionally in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

4. The trade union representatives welcome the common platform between the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization. The three organizations will explore the following opportunities for further action, as a follow-up to the Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment:

- (a) To undertake capacity-building and training, and the development of joint training materials for trade union leaders and workers in the following areas:
 - (i) Climate change mitigation and adaptation: adaptation measures and their impacts on employment and workers' health;
 - (ii) Sustainable consumption and production, including environmental management systems and occupational health and safety;
 - (iii) Corporate environmental and social responsibility, as called for at the World Summit on Sustainable Development;
 - (iv) Environmental content of global social dialogue, including framework agreements;

- (v) Awareness and preparedness for emergencies at the local level including disaster management;
 - (vi) Multilateral environmental agreements and law: improved awareness and understanding of their applicability to the workplace;
 - (vii) Sound management of chemicals, including through evolving and newly adopted treaties or agreements, of industrial chemicals and of pesticides and enhancing the role of trade unions and workers in the implementation of the strategic approach for international chemicals management, the European Union REACH system and other programmes; and revitalizing the UNEP-ILO-WHO memorandum of understanding on the safe use of chemicals;
- (b) To facilitate the engagement of the labour movement with public authorities, for example, in public services delivery;
 - (c) To replicate the successful case studies presented at the Assembly and, to that end, to create and maintain a website to collect the case studies and to consider their possible publication;¹
 - (d) To promote the engagement of trade unions with other major groups, including multi-stakeholder dialogue to address the sustainable development agenda;
 - (e) To undertake a study on the incorporation of just employment into environmental policy design;
 - (f) To promote environmentally and socially responsible job growth;
 - (g) Jointly to review implementation of agreements on a regular basis;
 - (h) To provide a model for joint, integrated planning among the different sectors, such as the Health and Environment Linkages Initiative of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme;
 - (i) To invite the World Health Organization to present a global action plan on occupational health to the World Health Assembly in 2007, with contributions from the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme;
 - (j) To provide an analysis of the health aspects of the transition to sustainable production, including the health consequences of changes in the employment situation.

¹ It is noted that WHO can make all its publications available, either on its website or in hard copy, or both.