

**TRADE UNION CONFERENCE
ON LABOUR AND THE ENVIRONMENT
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Sao Paulo, Brazil, April 17-19, 2006**

SAO PAULO DECLARATION

Preamble

Latin America and the Caribbean exist in a paradox: they have vast natural resources and raw materials and are endowed with varied ecosystems and rich traditional knowledge systems that exist side by side with grave environmental and social problems, including deforestation, unsustainable use of natural resources, pollution, a large portion of the population living in poverty and growing injustice and social inequality, particularly affecting women and indigenous communities, as a consequence of a evil, exclusionary and unsustainable development model.

Since the 80s and 90s, the region has been a privileged testing ground for neoliberal policies that promoted privatization and denationalization of companies, neoliberal restructuring of production, mass unemployment and precarious work situations. These policies, modeled on the international financial institutions' (IFI) paradigm of structural adjustment favored large transnational corporations.

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions that is most exposed to the impacts of the liberalization of service sectors and NAMA (Non-agricultural Market Access), currently in negotiation under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), with direct consequences for water, public services, education, health, communications and other sectors. The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) plan is another large threat to the region, together with existing and planned free trade agreements between the United States and other countries, involving clauses for stimulating foreign investment.

In spite of this, in recent years, large-scale struggles and social movements have been able to challenge neoliberal policies, transforming Latin America and the Caribbean into a point of reference for resistance to neoliberalism with the participation of unions, and peasant and indigenous movements. Not by chance, some of these large struggles have developed around protecting natural resources, against water privatization, and protecting natural gas and other public goods in different countries in the region. In this context, various governments, committed to popular struggles and social movements, have been elected and are now constructing a new socio-political milieu in the region, with appearance of *Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas*—ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean), the *Comunidad Suramericana*

de Naciones—CSN (South American Community of Nations), and the *Tratados de Comercio con los Pueblos*—TCP (Trade Agreements with the Peoples).

In this new reality of advancing social and environmental struggles more than 60 union members, representing organizations from 13 countries, met for the Union Conference on Labor and the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean on April 17, 18 and 19, 2006 in Sao Paulo, which was organized by Sustainlabour and CIOSL-ORIT. It was attended by delegates from CLAT and representatives from subregional union coordinator committees and International Union Federations.

Considering:

- The results of the First Trade Union Assembly on Labor and the Environment (Nairobi, January 15-17, 2006), organized by UNEP, Sustainlabour, ICFTU and WCL, which provide a framework for the relationship between labor and the environment, and which discussed guidelines for energy policies and climate change, public access to resources and services, particularly water, chemical risk and hazardous substances, occupational and environmental health, particularly with respect to asbestos and HIV/AIDS, and businesses' environmental responsibilities;
- Labour's Platform for the Americas, presented at the IV Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata in 2005, particularly the public policies on regulating and providing public goods and the definition of "Decent Work for Sustainable Development in the Americas," as well as the vision assembled in previous trade union congresses that environmental protection measures must be linked to reducing poverty and job creation;
- The agreement and ratification by a large majority of countries of numerous international protocols and conventions referring to or related to the environment: Rio 92, the Kyoto Protocol, the Conventions on Biodiversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Agreement on Hazardous Waste, the Convention on the Prior Informed Consent, the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, the Millennium Development Goals, the sections on the environment in the OECD Guidelines for multinational corporations and the United Nations Global Compact.
- The principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," particularly in establishing commitments to reducing emissions of polluting gases and mitigating climate change.

- The contributions and proposals arising out of debates in the Thematic and Subregional Groups at this conference, aimed at defining strategies and priorities for common actions.

We agree:

1. To strengthen the links between the environment, work and poverty: decent work is essential for people to enjoy a sustainable livelihood. However, it is only possible to create decent and secure jobs if environmental sustainability is attained. We emphasize the importance of mainstreaming and systemically addressing public policies that guarantee access to goods and services, sanitation, health, energy, housing, education, public transportation, social security as an indispensable element in overcoming poverty and protecting access to water as a human right.
2. To protect the fundamental rights of workers and their unions, such as the right to free association and collective negotiation so that they can participate in strategies in favor of sustainable development, which is understood as development that ensures decent work with clean technology and productive processes that do not harm the environment, workers, their families or society in general. To protect gender equity and the inclusion of women workers as a fundamental condition for advancing the realization of an environmentally and socially sustainable region. We will protect "just transitions" towards sustainable production and consumption and define policies that ensure that workers who are negatively affected during restructuring processes have decent work alternatives.
3. To reject "double standard" policies used by some multinational companies that "export" to Latin America and the Caribbean production methods that negatively impact the environment and that are not legally or socially acceptable in their countries of origin. We will incorporate the new concept of corporate environmental and social responsibility (CESR) and affirm the necessity of collaborating with ICFTU in creating and operationalizing the concept.
4. To strengthen strategic relationships with other social movements and socio-environmental organizations and networks, particularly with the *Alianza Social Continental*—ASC (Continental Social Alliance) and its development of "Alternatives for the Americas," which includes an important section on the environment.
5. To strengthen the focus on sustainable development and the environment specifically by strengthening Labour's Platform for the Americas and incorporating the follow-up indicators structure on the environment. We

must also strengthen specific structures on environmental issues in national headquarters and confederations.

6. To contribute to strengthening the states' role in establishing and applying indispensable regulations to control companies and world markets and increase the states' role as the provider and regulator of the private sector in the provision of public goods. To demand from states a larger investment of resources for environmental policies. To urge governments to invest in research and development in support of strategies to eliminate the risks of environmental contamination in already established sectors and to contribute to the creation of sustainable development strategies.
7. To demand that regional governments create a political and educational foundation that incorporates environment, health and sustainable development issues in courses of study (at all levels: primary, secondary and university), with the objective of raising awareness and educating to protect quality of life and of survival.
8. To strengthen the topic of union training for workers as a political strategy to learn about work and sustainable development.
9. To strengthen multilateral environmental governance and union participation in the inter-governmental instruments of ILO, OECD, and the United Nations system and to collaborate with UNEP-ILO on studies on incorporating decent work in the design of environmental policies.
10. To implement campaigns on the national plan to ratify and establish regulations for ILO agreements (121, 148, 155, 161, 162, 167, 170, 174, 184), as well as the most relevant agreements on Safety and Health at Work (SHW), and Agreement 121 on work policies, and to support the Global Employment Agenda (GEA). We need to create a dynamic information bank on real cases of environmental problems in the region, emphasizing union interventions and state actions.
11. To establish water as a key issue for union work in the region, supporting the position of ISP and of other social organizations in the Joint Declarations of Social Movements and Organizations on Water at the Social Forum of the Americas (Caracas, January 2006) and during the round of meetings on cities during the IV World Forum on Water (Mexico, March 2006).
12. To address environmental issues created by the phenomenon of internal rural/urban and external migration.
13. To support actions undertaken by REL-UITA, COPROFAM and other organizations involved in the field, to combat the expansion of agrottoxics,

organisms genetically modified and production models of intensive agriculture based on unsustainable production techniques. To promote an agricultural production model based on principles of agroecology and family agriculture. This struggle is directly linked to the movement for agrarian reform and to demands for food security and sovereignty and justice in agriculture.

14. To support Global Unions in its work incorporating and rigidly applying environmental and socio-occupational safeguards in IFI operations that provide credit to economic projects in the region.
15. To support CCSCS member headquarters and confederations in their Declaration this past March on the wood pulp conflict between Uruguay and Argentina, inasmuch as this is the route that should be taken to resolve this problem.

Sao Paolo, April 19, 2006

- Argentina: CGT-RA and CTA
- Brazil: CUT, CGT and Força Sindical
- Colombia: CTC, CGT
- Costa Rica: CTRN
- Ecuador: CEOSL
- El Salvador: CSTS
- Honduras: CUTH
- Mexico: UNT, CROC
- Nicaragua: CST
- Paraguay: CUT-A, CNT
- Peru: CUT
- Dominican Republic: CNUS
- Uruguay: PIT-CNT
- ICFTU
- CCSCS
- CCLA
- CSACC
- CTCS
- REL-UITA
- ISP
- COPROFAM

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