International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

1. Action/practice/project undertaken

As part of its commitment to accompany trade unions in understanding, committing and taking action on climate change, the ITUC has presented an Action Pledge to commit publicly and gather support for undertaking studies, training sessions and information sharing towards the objectives and expected outcomes of the NWP. These actions have a global scope, in some cases accompanied with a regional focus.

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Integrating climate policy in broad union policy lobbying documents & mainstreaming employment into climate change policy making

Progress in achieving coherence within the international labour movement has been impressive. All major labour statements to the UN, G8 and G20 included a prominent section on climate change, where the need for commitment by developed countries and action on emerging economies on mitigation and the need for increasing public funding for adaptation were highlighted.

High level bilateral union-government meetings were organised, all raising the importance of social and economic consequences of climate change as well as the need for better inclusion of employment and social aspects in adaptation policies.

Training

Only in 2009, more than 186 trade union representatives from 77 trade union centers, from 40 countries received training on climate change. These activities -organised and coordinated by Sustainlabour with the support of the ITUC and its regional bodies- are considered a key first step in the consolidation of unions' understanding about climate change.

Regional training sessions were held in Buenos Aires, for the Latin American region, in Togo and Kenya, for the African region, in Baku, for the Eastern Europe and Central Asian region. National trainings were held organised in Nepal and Argentina, where 34 young trade unionists below 30 years old.

Research & workshops

A Research Workshop on Climate Change Impacts on Employment and the Labour Market has been held in the framework of the ITUC Action Pledge, in Brussels, Belgium the last 25-26 February 2010, in cooperation with the Global Unions Research Network. The meeting explored the social consequences and positive potential of adaptation and mitigation policies for labour, the linkages between the ILO's Decent Work agenda and the need for reducing vulnerability vis-à-vis climate change. The papers will be published in the International Journal of Labour Research. The ITUC will submit these papers to the NWP to feed discussions on socio-economic information, economic diversification and adaptation planning.

Debates

The first ITUC Women’s Conference (October 2009), discussed impacts of climate change on women workers, as well as options for developing green jobs for women as a means for diversifying economies. A publication, “Green Jobs and Women Workers” was released for that

1 The ITUC represents 170 million workers of the world in 157 countries and territories and has 312 national affiliates. Its primary mission is the promotion and defence of workers’ rights and interests, through international cooperation between trade unions, global campaigning and advocacy within the major global institutions.

2 www.sustainlabour.org
occasion. In the context of COP15, in Copenhagen, the ITUC organised the World of Work (WoW) Pavilion, as a parallel space where the linkages between the world of work and climate change were showcased. More than a thousand participants joined the unions in this initiative.

2. (Interim) results achieved

The ITUC emphasises the ongoing character of these activities. Training, awareness raising and active participation of trade unions on reducing vulnerability, enhancing resilience and helping communities adapting to climate change is of utmost importance.

As part of a continuous evaluation, some improvements have been made to the training, which include now a broader permanent introduction to sustainability which frames action on adaptation, as well as group work, which facilitates exchanges within unionists from the same region and enables a more interactive approach to these issues.

As a result of the research seminar, a growing corpus of knowledge on employment and climate change has been identified, and a certain number of researchers from developed and developing countries’ universities have expressed support for building a research network to fill knowledge gaps.

3. Challenges, lessons learned and emerging needs

Activities undertaken under the pledge were aimed at enabling a broad trade union participation at regional, national and local level with the clear intend of disseminating information on adaptation, sharing of knowledge and good practices, raising awareness and by promoting Decent Work opportunities as the tool to escape poverty and climate change vulnerability. Government officials, policy makers, non-governmental organisations, researchers and climate change experts were engaged in the activities below.

For the trade union movement, the challenges ahead regarding climate change are huge: first, there is still a need for raising awareness among the labour movement about the need for action on climate change, and the strong linkages this has with the world of work and union’s role.

The second challenge regards the need for further research on this topic, in particular on specific initiatives, experiences and on-the-ground challenges for unions regarding climate change policies.

The third challenge remains integrating employment and trade unions in the debates about climate change, where social issues are rarely mentioned, and when it is the case, they are hardly debated in depth.

The ITUC believes the fight against climate change should not be seen as a necessary burden, but as a real opportunity for changing production and consumption patterns, sustainably eradicating poverty and ensuring decent livelihoods for all workers of the world. This kind of actions help building on the potential the labour movement for achieving all these goals together, in a coherent manner, and ensuring social progress.
unions have solutions

just transition
CLIMATE CHANGE

WoW

world of work

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