

**TRADE UNION AFRICAN CONFERENCE  
ON LABOUR AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
Johannesburg, South Africa, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2006**

**JOHANNESBURG DECLARATION**

**Preamble**

In Africa, poverty and environmental damage appear on different sides of a common coin. Drought, deforestation, desertification, water, soil and air pollution, all have negative impacts on the lives of workers, their families and communities, with serious consequences for employment, food security and for occupational or public health.

The linkages between labour and environment must be strengthened, ensuring social and environmental cohesion. Their relevance to production, workplaces and community realities have given rise to new roles as trade unions of the XXI<sup>st</sup> Century and as practical actors of change.

Sixty-two union members representing twenty-four national centres in nineteen countries met for the First African Trade Union Conference on Labour and the Environment, held in Johannesburg, 28-29 July, 2006.

The African Regional Organization of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU AFRO), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and Sustainlabour organized the conference. It was attended by delegates from ICFTU AFRO, the Democratic Organization of African Workers' Trade Unions (DOAWTU), and the regional offices of the Building and Woodworkers' International (BWI), International Textile, Garment & Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), Public Services International (PSI) and Union Network International (UNI).

**Considering:**

- The First Global Trade Union Assembly on Labor and the Environment (Nairobi, January 15-17, 2006) was organized by UNEP, Sustainlabour, ICFTU, WCL and TUAC. The results of the Assembly provide a framework for action on labor and the environment and make recommendations on energy 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, HIV/AIDS, and corporate social accountability;

- The agreement and ratification by a large majority of countries of numerous international protocols and conventions referring or related to the environment: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development- Rio 92, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, UNEP Biodiversity Convention and its Biosafety Protocol, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Basel Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm 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 enterprises and the United Nations Global Compact;
- The principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities";
- The contributions and proposals arising from the thematic and *Subregional Groups* of this conference aim to define strategies and priorities for common actions.
- The bases for an action plan proposed by trade unions from different regions of Africa in this Conference are attached to this declaration.

**We agree to:**

1. Strengthen our understanding of the links between the environment, labour and poverty. Decent Work should be taken to embrace environmental sustainability, as essential to sustainable livelihood.
2. Make the fundamental rights of workers and their unions a central feature of sustainable development strategies, e.g. for freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to refuse dangerous and hazardous work.
3. Ensure gender equity and women worker issues as indicators of environmental and social sustainability ( e.g. of regions) and integrate such indicators into sustainable development strategies for designing and implementing change.

4. Guarantee the participation of trade unions and other civil society groups (NGOs, local communities, etc.) in decision-making for environment and sustainable development. Promote tripartite dialogue, collective bargaining and other democratic processes.
5. Promote education at all levels that incorporate sustainable development for workers and their communities and provide adequate tools for workers to become meaningful actors of change.
6. Call for States to assume their roles in properly regulating companies and world markets, especially as it relates to the provision for goods and services, sanitation, health, water, energy, housing, education, public transportation and social security, i.e. as indispensable elements for overcoming poverty.
7. Call for States to increase their investments for environmental policies and their implementation, e.g. research & development that eliminate risks and environmental pollution.
8. Strengthen union training for leaders and workers, as a political strategy for building common labour-sustainable development actions.
9. Strengthen worker and trade unions knowledge about regional, international and intergovernmental processes, and about links to national, sector and local actions.
10. Strengthen union participation in inter-governmental processes of ILO, WHO, OECD, and the United Nations system, generally. Collaborate with UNEP-ILO-WHO on studies incorporating decent work and health in the design of environmental policies.
11. Call for "just transition" programmes to ensure that workers, negatively affected by restructuring, obtain *Decent Work* provisions, in the process towards sustainable production and consumption.
12. Call on Multinational and national enterprises to allocate resources for establishing and improving the accountability and transparency of their social and environmental behaviour, taking into account equity concerns.
13. Reject the "double standards" of some multinational enterprises that "export" environmental, social and production methods to Africa, which are not allowed in the countries of origin.
14. Exchange experiences, improve solidarity and coordinate actions among trade unions on issues of multinational companies.

15. Implement the 2002 Johannesburg plan of implementation, with respect to chemicals, where the onus for chemical safety for workers, consumers and communities rests with industry. Support the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants for the phasing out of hazardous substances. Adopt the precautionary principle and the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management (SAICM) and its follow-up.
16. Call on States to develop databases and provide available statistics on occupational diseases, illnesses, injuries and deaths and the claims related to them.
17. Call on governments to ratify ILO Conventions 155 on Health and Safety, 161 on Occupational Health and Safety Services, 170 on Chemicals, 176 Safety and Health in Mines, 182 Worst Forms of Child Labour and 184 on Health and Safety in Agriculture.
18. Combat the expanding uses of agrottoxics and intensive agricultural production based on unsustainable techniques. Promote agroecology and family agriculture. Call for land reform, food security and sovereignty and justice in agriculture.
19. Promote social dialogue on national climate change policies when addressing vulnerability issues and in adaptation and mitigation plans.
20. Make water a priority for union organizing efforts in the regions. Support the PSI and other social organizations in promoting universal, equitable, egalitarian and environmentally sound access to basic resources such as water and energy as essential components of human rights.
21. Promote the education of communities and raise awareness about the serious consequences of managing resources as commodities,
22. Promote sustainable production and consumption patterns through cleaner production centres and the dissemination and transfer of technology.
23. Support Global Unions to incorporate environmental and socio-occupational safeguards in the operations of International Finance Institutions.
24. Promote the Global Framework Agreements signed by the Global Unions Federations with multinational enterprises to safeguard core labour standards, as well as environmental and sustainable development provisions.
25. Link occupational safety and health to environmental and public health policy and practice; while raising standards of occupational health and

- safety as an objective in its own right. Reinforce the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organisation and their respective Instruments and programmes. Ensure the right to reproductive health for both women and men.
26. Call for a complete global ban on asbestos use, for its proper handling and disposal in accordance with the decisions of the Parties to the Basel Convention and for its inclusion in the Rotterdam Convention.
27. Promote integrated and workplace-based approaches to fight HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

Johannesburg, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2006

- Benin: UNSTB
- Botswana: BTU
- Chad: SYNADER
- Congo (RDC): CSC
- Ghana: GTUC
- Guinea Conakry: ONSLG
- Kenya: COTU
- Malawi: MCTU
- Mali: CSTM
- Morocco: UGTM
- Mauritania: UGTM
- Mauritius: MTUC, MLC and NTUC
- Nigeria: NLC
- Senegal: SNTS/SONES, SAT-SDE
- South Africa: COSATU, FEDUSA and NACTU
- Tanzania: TUCTA and TPAWU
- Uganda: NOTU
- Zimbabwe: ZCTU
- ICFTU Afro
- DOAWTU
- BWI
- ITGLWF
- ITF
- IUF
- PSI
- UNI

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