

**PRE-CONGRESS WORKSHOP ON
CLIMATE CHANGE and COP 17**

Parktonian Hotel, Johannesburg (South Africa) 22-24th November, 2011

CONCEPT NOTE

I. INTRODUCTION

The International Trade Union Confederation-Africa (ITUC-Africa) plan a two day workshop for trade unions in Africa on climate change in the run up to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Climate Change from in Durban, South Africa. The meeting is planned as part of pre-congress activities prior to the first ITUC Africa Congress which will be held from 25th – 26th October 2011 in Abuja Nigeria. The pre-congress workshop on climate change is consequently scheduled to take place from 22nd – 23rd November 2011.

II. BACKGROUND

The year 2011 is critical for the intergovernmental negotiations on climate change, in particular from the perspective of African and other developing countries. It is also critical for the trade union movement in Africa and its contribution, as part of the global trade union movement, to efforts to establish a socially just global regime which saves humanity from the catastrophe of further climate change, while creating space for sustainable development in countries in Africa and other parts of the developing world.

The preparations for, and the outcomes of, the UNFCCC conference at the end of the year in Durban, South Africa, have become a vehement contestation between two opposite paradigms and approaches to global action on the crisis of climate change.

On the one hand, African and other developing countries are demanding to continue with and improve the existing framework. This comprises an international regime, with compliance mechanisms, which sets obligations for countries based on what science tells us necessary, within which the developed countries with historical responsibility for the climate crisis, but also with the most resources, can undertake the necessary commitments, and support African and other developing countries with the means both to adapt to the effects of climate change as well as to contribute to the global mitigation efforts.

On the other hand, the developed countries are embarked on a path to replace the current regime with a “pledge and review system” in which countries take only those actions that are consistent with their own national circumstances and prescriptions. Already, as part of

this process, developed countries Japan, Russia, and Canada have declared their abandonment of their treaty obligations under the Kyoto Protocol to cut their greenhouse gas emissions. Other developed countries have decided to subject the fulfilment of these obligations to new conditionalities outside the framework of the treaty.

The approach being pursued by the developed countries runs against the entire history of global understanding and efforts to address climate change, starting with the Kyoto Protocol, Bali Plan of Action and UNFCCC. The first attempt to derail the already internationally agreed consensus was witnessed during COP 15 which was held in Copenhagen in December 2009. For the first time in the history of the UN, a group of few member states initiated a negotiation process that alienated other UN member states. This unorthodox negotiating style resulted into the so-called Copenhagen Accord which eventually was rejected and consequently not adopted (but noted) by the conference. However, the Copenhagen Accord provided a platform for introducing into the UNFCCC negotiations process a space for discussing the 'pledge and review' system. **Vigorously contested throughout 2010 in all the preparatory negotiations, it became a part of the outcomes of the Cancun conference. The struggle around this has consumed much of the subsequent inter-sessional negotiations in Bangkok (April) and Bonn (June 2011)**

This attempt to undermine the current regime is unacceptable to Africa. Due to its reliance on agricultural sector, low capacity in responding to climate change challenges due to low technological capacity and poor economic performance, land mass and other geo-physical characteristics Africa is currently and will in the future suffer more than any other region of the world. Ironically, Africa's contribution to the problem is much lower than that by other regions of the world, particularly the advanced industrial countries who are currently trying to avoid a legally binding and internationally monitored system.

For Africa trade unions, a decision on this matter will determine the success or failure of COP 17 in Durban. African trade unions cannot accept the adoption of a 'pledge and review' system since this will have catastrophic implications to the workers and communities in the region. Instead, Africa trade unions will devote all efforts to ensure the outcomes of Durban support the continuation and strengthening of the existing regime, including in particular science-and-equity based outcomes on a global temperature goal, and related actions on mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology.

COP 17 is also seen as a very important meeting for African trade unions based on achievement registered during the UNFCCC negotiations. Throughout the UNFCCC negotiating process, African Trade Unions in collaboration with the global trade union movement have been pushing for consideration of the social consequences of climate change and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. African trade unions and global partners developed the Just Transition (JT) principle which called for recognition of the ILO Decent Work Agenda in the UNFCCC negotiating text. The principle also called for creation of green jobs, promotion of green economies, retraining of workers, job relocations

and appropriate compensations. It was gratifying to African trade unions when this principle was adopted during COP 16 in Cancun where it was incorporated in the 'Shared Vision' and 'Social Consequences' sections of the negotiating text.

African trade unions believe that for this principle to be translated into practical benefit in and for Africa, it must be strengthened and operationalized in all fundamental elements of the international regime on climate change, and in a manner that meets the needs and circumstances of Africa. **In this regard, the international regime and must, in particular, allow for and support the structural transformation of Africa economies, their industrialisation and the creation of decent work.**

African trade unions also believe that adoption of the principle was a significant step but the greatest challenge for the trade union movement is to develop a plan for operationalizing JT. Trade unions must develop an operational roadmap ready to share with other stakeholders by COP17. Such roadmap should among other things indicate which institutional mechanisms will be responsible for implementation of JT at national, sub regional, regional and international levels and which procedures should be put into place for reporting progress on social consequences of mitigation and adaptation measures.

III. OBJECTIVES

The meeting aims to:

(a) Deepen the understanding by trade unions in Africa of the key issues of climate justice, the status of UNFCCC negotiations, and the opportunities and challenges of COP 17

(b) Discuss ways for increased recognition of African trade union demands as well as and increased participation of African trade unions in climate change advocacy, in the global movement, within African civil society, and in relation to African governments;

(c) Identify possibilities for translation of the JT principle in all elements of the UNFCCC including on technology transfer, financial mechanism, mitigation and adaptation measures, NAPAs, and in institutional frameworks.

(d) Develop strategy for work towards Durban and beyond.

IV. PARTICIPANTS, VENUE, DATES, etc.

(a) The meeting will take place over three days, in Johannesburg from 22nd – 24th November 2011.

(b) About 30 participants from the African trade union movement as well as a few representatives from the global trade union movement and African civil society. 40-50% of the African trade union participants will be women.

(c) The meeting will be conducted in English, Portuguese and French with simultaneous interpretation, and documentation in both languages, to the extent possible.