



AFRICAN TRADE UNION KEY DEMANDS FOR COP27

Context

The African Trade Union movement, represented by the ITUC-Africa, organised a Meeting of affiliates from various countries and African representatives of Global Union Federations ahead of COP27, scheduled to take place in Sham El Sheik. The Meeting noted that a much more significant proportion of the world now recognises climate change as an existential threat that the global community must deal with through collectively agreed and individually determined commitments. Moreover, in response to the 2015 Paris Agreement, most countries have submitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), thus reinforcing the implementation phase of the Paris Agreement. Meanwhile, COP27 takes place on African soil when the world is saddled with a myriad of multiple crises.

Amid the daunting social and economic conditions unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is witnessing geopolitical tensions with the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war. In its wake, African countries are experiencing global supply chain disruptions, growing external and domestic indebtedness, associated currency depreciation, spiralling inflation, and mounting energy and food crises. These are fuelling social tensions when decent work deficits grow alongside unemployment and underemployment. And, in all countries, women, informally employed, Persons Living with Disabilities, migrants, and other vulnerable categories in society suffer the most. Meanwhile, the huge deficits in public services like health, water, electricity and education are already undermining efforts to realise the SDGs. Moreover, inequalities, especially gender-based ones, are worsening, as evidenced by the female-male employment ratio, social protection coverage, gender-pay gap and differential access to public goods that are a fundamental right.

The Meeting noted that even though African countries have been and continue to be a major source of the raw materials for global wealth creation, African countries are the least beneficiaries. Over the years, a much more significant proportion of Africa's agricultural and mineral raw material wealth has been siphoned out of Africa through various fraudulent mechanisms, illegally and illegitimately. It recalled how illicit financial flows have damaged African countries' domestic resource mobilisation efforts and robbed them of finance to address ever-increasing climate-related disasters. Therefore, efforts to move away from the fossil-based economic systems responsible for the climate crises must proceed in tandem with efforts to end the pervasive poverty, hunger and deindustrialisation of African economies, in line with the UNFCCC and the SDGs.

The Meeting recalled that the fundamental principles of the UNFCCC, the guidance to global climate fund and other funding mechanisms, and the mounting scientific evidence pointing to what could become a climate catastrophe informed some of the successes and decisions of COP26. It noted, in particular, the adoption of the Declaration on Just Transition, the recognition of the need for enhanced mitigation, finance for mitigation and adaptation, and mechanisms for Loss and Damage. However, mitigation measures in various sectors would be more effective if they addressed workers' rights therein. For that matter, workers and trade unions must necessarily participate in the reviewing and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to ensure a sustainable reduction pathway that is just for workers, women and other vulnerable categories in society.

Against this backdrop, African Trade Unions make the following Key Demands for COP27

1. Climate Finance

G20 and other wealthy industrialised countries deliver on their financial obligations and expand the finance delivery up to 2024/5. They must deliver on their promises and commit even more in the face of compelling scientific evidence. Climate finance is one of the necessary conditions to enable African countries to implement their mitigation actions and raise their ambitions. Therefore, COP27 must ensure a transparent delivery of climate finance which must be grants and not loans, as the latter would further deepen the debt crisis many African countries find themselves in.

2. Adaptation Funding

The COP must progress on adaptation funding given the growing evidence of the fiscal and resource mobilisation constraints in the face of mounting climate hazards. Accordingly, trade unions support the African Group of Negotiators' demand for enhanced adaptation funding, which should enable African countries to reduce their exposure and sensitivity to climate hazards and launch them on sustainable development pathways. The adaptation funding should also be gender-responsive in enhancing social support services, leverage efforts to establish universal social protection and strengthen resilience.

3. Loss and Damage

There is need for a more concerted effort to agree on Loss and Damage. Negotiating Loss and Damage is a primary demand given the increased incidence of climate-related disasters and their far-reaching destabilisation of jobs, livelihoods, infrastructure and communities. Furthermore, fundamental human rights demand that communities suffering the ravages of climate-related disasters must receive consistent international support. Meanwhile, social protection instruments provide helpful guidance in establishing such mechanisms. Finally, Trade Unions make the solemn reminder that the communities suffering these woes are not responsible for global warming and climate change.

4. Mitigation Ambition

The G20 and other wealthy industrialised countries primarily responsible for global warming commit to higher emission reduction ambition and deliver on it. However, given the scientific evidence, the current levels fall short of the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming by 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. The trade unions recall that UNFCCC has consistently called on the leading emitters to lead in raising mitigation ambition.

5. Just Transition

Climate action, sustainable development, and a just transition are required conditions for achieving the Paris Agreement goals. Parties to the Agreement must consider "the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities". The ILOs detailed guidelines renegotiated between governments, employers, and their organisations, as well as workers and their Trade Unions, establishes a global understanding of the term "just transition". It describes it as a process "towards an environmentally sustainable economy, which "needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty". Therefore, following the COP26 Declaration on Just Transition, it is necessary to clarify how to implement it. A Just Transition to a carbon-neutral society must ensure the active involvement of women, workers and youth in climate decision-making at all levels and ensure gender-responsive outcomes regarding employment creation, skills development, incomes, social protection, social dialogue and decent work in general. Therefore, Just Transition must consistently respect the principles of equality and non-discrimination and intentionally create frameworks for removing systemic inequities and inequalities, and promote all human rights.

Strategic Perspective

In furtherance of these demands, African trade unions reiterate their commitment to collaborate with all and sundry to advance the goals of the Paris Agreement while advancing a Just Transition for workers and their communities, African countries and the global south. Accordingly, unions continue to raise climate awareness among workers everywhere and strengthen collaboration among trade unions within and across countries to enhance involvement in NDCs and climate action. Trade Unions salute the African Group of Negotiators for going to the COP27 with the most progressive positions and assure them of their readiness to work with them in Sham El Sheik and beyond. Africa Trade Unions will also continue collaborating with CSOs to undertake relevant research, training and education, campaigns and advocacy to back the workers' demands. Trade unions remain resolute in working to avert climate catastrophe, hence the continued efforts to nurture south-south and north-south cooperation.