

RESOLUTION OF THE 2nd ITUC AFRICA CONGRESS

(2nd Congress of ITUC-Africa, Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg, 25th-27th November 2011)

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT or CLIMATE CHANGE

We, ITUC Affiliates and delegates to the second ITUC Africa Congress gathered at Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg, 25th-27th November 2011:

1. Recognizing the role of workers and their organizations in protecting the workplace, community and the wider environment;
2. Noting with serious concern the low level of participation and engagement of workers and their organizations at regional, sub regional and national levels in the area of health and environmental management;
3. Appreciating the intricate linkage between health and environment;
4. The disproportionate impact that health and environmental problems exerts on women as compared to their male counterparts;
5. Concerned about the deleterious effects on workers health and the environment resulting from the manufacture, transportation, storage, use and disposal of hazardous substances and chemical waste;
6. Alarmed by the rise in the number of chemical accidents and products containing nano materials (nanotechnology), the deliberate dumping of electronic waste (e-waste) such as computers and mobile phones, increasing importation of toxic children toys and the continued use of toxic substances in products such as in paints, cosmetic products and fuel;
7. Noting with concern the loss of life and the social economic impact of Malaria on the governments and the African;
8. Concerned that Climate Change poses a serious threat to poverty reduction and could jeopardize developmental gains achieved in recent decades and limit the capacity of Africa Nations to attain MDGs;
9. Recognizing that adaptation and mitigation measures as proposed under the UNFCCC may bring benefits as well as problems in the world of work at regional, national and local levels,
10. Recalling the *Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment* adopted at the meeting of African Ministers of Health and Environment in 2008;
11. Further recalling the *Joint Statement on Climate Change and Health* adopted by African Ministers of Health and Environment in their meeting in Luanda Angola on 26th November 2010;

12. Taking note of the OAU *Harare Declaration on Malaria Prevention and Control in the context of African Economic Recovery and Development* of 4th June 1997 and the African Heads of States *Abuja Declaration on Roll Back Malaria* of 25th June 2000
13. Further noting the African Heads of States *Lome Agreement* of July 2000 and the Abuja Declaration of April 2001 on *HIV AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases*;
14. Welcoming regional initiatives aiming at tackling climate change such as those carried out by the African High Level Expert Panel on Climate Change;
15. Taking note of the *Bamako Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development* adopted on 25th June 2010 by African Ministers of Environment during the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) which was held in Bamako Mali from 20th – 25th June 2010 and which put into place regional strategies for climate change and biodiversity;
16. Appreciating positive progress made under UNFCCC COP 16 negotiations which took place in Cancun Mexico in December 2010 and where Parties to UNFCCC adopted the Trade Union proposal on principle of Just Transition;
17. Concerned about the inherent weaknesses under UNFCCC including the lack of appropriate financial mechanism and the low level of financial support so far extended to developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
18. Recognizing the ILO Plan of Action (2010 – 2016) which aim at widespread ratification and effective implementation of occupational safety and health instruments;
19. Conscious of the existence but non operational nature of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the import into Africa and the control of the transboundary movement and Management of Hazardous Waste within Africa adopted by OAU Heads of States in 1991;
20. Further noting a rapid increase of impact of chemicals on human health and the environment despite adoption of various international instruments such as the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel Conventions;
21. The low number of ratification of ILO conventions that address Occupational Safety and Health issues including Convention 155, 170, and 184;

WE SOLEMNLY DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

22. WE CONSIDER the current challenges posed by exposure to hazardous chemicals, climate change and occupational safety and health as a State of Emergency in the continent and to this end all efforts and resources that should be made available to address this drastic situation;
23. We FURTHER CONSIDER the situation whereby working women, young girls and workers in the informal sector are left to be more vulnerable to occupational safety, health and environmental challenges unacceptable;

24. REAFIRM our strong resolve to make the year 2012, a year of renewed vigour in the trade union movement struggle for promotion and protection of health and environmental rights of workers and their families in the region;
25. COMMIT OURSELVES to participate effectively in all initiatives at the Regional, Sub Regional, National and Workplace levels that aim at tackling all occupational safety, health and environmental problems
26. COMMIT OURSELVES FURTHER to tackle the root causes of problems associated with hazardous substances, climate change, diseases and all other occupational safety, health and environmental problems;
27. WE UNDERTAKE to mobilize all working people, men and women, young and old, in the formal and informal sectors to participate effectively in tackling all occupational safety, health and environmental challenges;
28. WE ARE DETERMINED to make African workplaces free of all forms of occupational safety, health and environmental problems;
29. WE STRONGLY SUPPORT the Trade Union negotiating team for championing the cause of workers and their organization under the UNFCCC
30. WE COMMEND efforts taken under the auspices of the AU through various agreements, resolutions and declarations in the area of health and environment;

WE THEREFORE,

31. CALL UPON ITUC Africa National Affiliates to take as a matter of priority necessary actions that will promote occupational safety, health and environment at the grass root level where the impact is more pronounced; these actions may include among other actions, nomination and training of Union Focal Points, apply for seats in national implementation committees; development of awareness raising materials, development of data collection, processing and storage mechanisms and development of effective lobbying tools e.g. conduction of appropriate case studies;
32. REQUEST National Affiliates to develop a stronger linkage between traditional Trade Union agenda on labour rights, OHS, environment and Climate Change;
33. REQUEST the ILO to provide necessary technical and financial support to tripartite partners for effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action (2010 – 2016) that aim at achieving widespread ratification and effective implementation of OSH instruments;
34. FURTHER CALL UPON the Africa Union (AU) to demonstrate the upholding the principle of tripartism by ensuring the full and effective participation of Trade Union Organizations in all its meetings and programs; in particular the AMCEN and the Joint Health and Environment Ministers meetings;

35. CALL ON the AU to operationalize the Bamako Convention by establishing a functional Secretariat at its headquarters and at the Sub regional levels;
36. SOLEMNLY APPEAL to Parties under the UNFCCC to exercise commitment and ensure that measurable and adequate emission reduction commitments are achieved and that developing countries are provided sufficient technical and financial support;
37. INSTRUCT ITUC Africa to:
 - a. Take stronger and more coordinated action at national, regional and international levels on matters related to climate change.
 - b. Facilitate capacity building of National Affiliates through regular and skills development trainings;
 - c. Strengthen the Regional Network through regular training of National Focal Points;
 - d. Build the capacity of Women and Youth in the area of OSHE through training of the Regional Gender and Youth Networks and National Gender Coordinators
 - e. Make use of the existing institutional structures under the Africa Union (AU) such as the Economic, Labour and Social Affairs Ministerial Council and the Africa Ministerial Council on Environment (AMCEN) and sub regional bodies (such as ECOWAS and SADC) to integrate Climate Change into their agenda and programs.
 - f. Reach out to national Governments, union membership and general population for purpose of developing a strong agenda for addressing climate change challenges and promotion of decent work and sustainable development