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Africa Trade Unions, COP26 and Beyond

The 26th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP26) wrapped up on Saturday, 13th November, 2021, following two weeks of intensive negotiations. The conference ended with the adoption of a less stringent resolution than anticipated – what most term a 'watered down' Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP) with focus on long term pledges and plans as opposed to much urgent action required.

News updates show the conference recorded the largest number of registered participants - an incredible number of 39 000 from nearly 200 countries with approximately 25 000 delegates in attendance. This was amidst massive concerns around safety raised by Civil Society Organizations ahead of the Conference. Noteworthy, COP26 was held off last year due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Albeit, the conference saw a major reduction in spaces allocated to observer groups as compared to previous years.

The Africa Trade Unions walked into COP 26 with 8 delegates from Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa and the Regional Office and joined a relatively fair number of delegates from around the world, making up the Global Trade Union Movement.

With intense lobby work, the Trade Union Movement mobilised and pushed forward its key demands.

Africa Trade Unions arrived in Glasgow with 5 specific demands outlined in its [statement](#) ahead of the Conference.

ITUC-Africa Key Demands To COP 26:

1. Raise climate ambition and back it with concrete action at all levels
2. Advance a Just Transition
3. Climate Finance for mitigation and adaptation
4. Loss and Damage
5. Multi stakeholder partnerships

Key Outcomes and Decisions

Raise Ambition and Climate Targets

COP26 was pivotal on several fronts. The conference was the first since the Paris Agreement of COP21 that expected parties to make enhanced commitments towards mitigating climate change. As at October, 2021, ahead of COP26, 140 countries — or nearly 70% of Paris Agreement signatories, accounting for 57% of global emissions — had submitted a new or updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Reports show current NDCs will lead to emissions that are 13.7% above the 2010 level in 2030 and put the world on track to 2.4° - what will be catastrophic if urgent action is not taken.

For developing countries, the threats would be even more daunting!

The Glasgow Climate Pact stresses the urgency of enhancing ambition and action in relation to mitigation, adaptation and finance in this critical decade to collectively reduce emissions through accelerated action and implementation of domestic mitigation measures.

Importantly, the GCP invites Parties to report on long term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and agrees to convene an annual high level ministerial round table on pre-2020 ambition ahead of each Conference of Parties.

Advancing A Just Transition of The Workforce

Following intensive negotiations and discussions, Just Transition was finally incorporated in the preambular language of Article 6.

Furthermore, the Glasgow Climate Pact calls on countries to “the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies” and explicitly recognises “the need for support towards a just transition” in this crucial paragraph. This is a major win for the global trade union movement.

There are now 49 countries that have explicitly included ‘just transition’ in their NDCs. This provides the global trade union movement an important base to work with governments, social partners and other stakeholders to implement just transition plans, policies and measures. It is a major call to action at the national level where unions must demand their place at the negotiation table (at the national level, in economic sectors and at the company level) to set up national jobs plans and company jobs plans.

In a declaration presented at COP26, governments declared support for just transition through green growth, decent work and economic prosperity as economies move towards net-zero emissions. The declaration, signed by fourteen donor countries and the European Commission, pledged to support the conditions for just transition in their development cooperation.

A landmark agreement from the Conference is the South Africa Deal - an \$8.5 billion commitment funded by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and the European Union - which is designed to achieve the lower bound of South Africa’s emissions targets under the Paris Agreement.

Climate Finance for Mitigation and Adaptation

The Glasgow Climate Pact notes with concern that the current provision of climate finance for adaptation remains insufficient to respond to worsening climate change impacts in developing country Parties; and urged developed country Parties to urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation so as to respond to the needs of developing country Parties as part of a global effort, including for the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans and adaptation communications;

Most importantly, the Glasgow Climate Pact urges developed country Parties to at least double their collective provision of climate finance for adaptation to developing country Parties from 2019 levels by 2025, in the context of achieving a balance between mitigation and adaptation in the provision of scaled-up financial resources.

Loss and Damage

Most importantly, and the biggest failure of COP26, is the lack of an agreement on Loss and Damage. Developed countries are asked to provide money to the operationalisation of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage but there is no mechanism for Loss and Damage finance for the vulnerable countries themselves. No fund that the poorest countries could draw on for crisis response which is so important to small islands and many climate vulnerable nations. Countries did not even agree to create a permanent place to discuss Loss and Damage inside the negotiations (a Loss and Damage facility) but only decided on organising some workshops.

Multistakeholder Partnerships

In her closing remarks, the Executive Director of UNFCCC asserts the need to leverage and strengthen multistakeholder engagement and partnerships and pledges continuous engagement with civil society and other groups for successful implementation of outcomes of COP26.

The Glasgow Climate Pact recognizes the role of multilateralism in addressing climate change and promoting regional and international cooperation in order to strengthen climate action in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

What Next?

Trade Union Actions Ahead of COP27

Egypt has officially been confirmed as host of the twenty seventh edition of the Conference of Parties (COP27) and this is important for the Africa Region, COP 27 comes six years after the second Marrakesh climate summit which was hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco in 2016. The 2001 Marrakesh summit hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco was the first COP hosted in Africa. It was followed by two successful sub-Saharan summits: COP 12 in Nairobi, Kenya in 2006; and COP 17 in Durban, South Africa in 2011.

All four climate summits yielded important outcomes which progressively strengthened global climate policy and established a strong foundation for collective climate action.

Egypt will have to assume the mantle of leadership in steering the COP toward collective climate action, achieving climate equity, justice, and accountability in the post-2020 implementation period of the Paris Agreement following the finalisation of the Paris Rule Book at the just ended COP.

It is important that all stakeholders begin immediate actions towards achieving a successful Africa COP and realizing concrete outcomes for urgent climate action.

Thus, Africa Trade Unions have a significant role to play in the lead up to Egypt.

Call to Action of ITUC-Africa Affiliates in the lead up to COP 27

All ITUC-Africa affiliates and Global Union Federations are encouraged to consciously and actively:

1. Disseminate outcomes of COP26 and the Glasgow Climate Pact to members, youth, community members etc... with concrete plans for mobilising collective engagement for action on relevant issues and decisions arising from the GCP.
2. Pursue discussions with relevant stakeholders on a Just Transition Framework for Africa at Regional level
3. Continuous advocacy for intergration of Just Transition Plans in Nationally Determined Contributions with full implementation at National level
4. Establish and strengthen multistakeholder engagement on climate policy through strategic partnerships for effective climate action at Regional and National level
5. Develop strategies for mobilisation on key regional demands and interests in line with Global climate policy under the UNFCCC, including on financing for adaptation and mitigation, capacity building and technology transfer, transparency and accountability framework ahead of COP 27.

ITUC-Africa as well as the Global Trade Union stand ready to support coordinated actions and solidarity towards a successful COP27.

For further information on COP26 or preparations for COP27, kindly contact rhoda.boateng@ituc-africa.org.



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