

Meet the Delegates

Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director, UNEP.



"When there is a WILL, there is a way".

Closing ceremony 17th January.

Willy Thys, General Secretary, World Confederation of Labour (WCL).



"My expectation is that we get out of this Assembly with objectives and concrete tracks that we can implement at all levels and integrate in the fights, in order to address the challenges of the environment and sustainable development."

Willy Madisha, President, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).



There are three important areas for COSATU's President Mr. Willy Madisha: "Poverty reduction, unemployment and disease. When we talk about the environment we encapsulate all of these three. This Assembly is historical because it is the first time that Trade Unions are coming together with the 'greens' to share knowledge and experience, and plan how to move forward on issues that are important for all of us and the environment. It is a process that first started in the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, continued in Johannesburg in 2002, and we must now push further forward."

Mr. Madisha explained that "workers are involved in all spheres of Sustainable Development, and when we talk about the environment we are inevitably also talking about, for example, work and HIV/AIDS (which grows in conditions of poverty and poor environment). A poor environment leads to more disease, unsustainable development and hunger. This Assembly is an opportunity for Trade Unions to improve their knowledge on these issues, establish a unity with the 'greens' and move forward to attack these problems."

George Muchai, Deputy General Secretary, COTU



Representing COTU, Mr Muchai emphasised the global importance of the Assembly and in particular in Kenya where issues of environment have not received adequate attention. Attributing this to lack of basic awareness and discipline in practices such as maintenance of environmental cleanliness at personal level, he was hopeful that these would be brought to the fore during the assembly. Mr Muchai announced the recent enactment of a law on environment in Kenya, and establishment of a body, the National Environment Management Authority, to address environmental issues, particularly on occupational health and safety measures. He further expressed desire for wider representation of Kenyan Trade Unions in future similar events.

Andrew Kailembo, General Secretary, International Confederation of Free Trade Union - African Regional Organisation (ICFTU- AFRO).



Mr Kailembo, representing more than 15 million members throughout the African continent, was pleased to note that the Assembly was the first one of its kind, marking the first step towards the way forward. He emphasized the need to have a sound beginning to the initiative, involvement of all parties concerned as well as substantial proper follow-up on all conclusions, recommendations and resolutions to be adopted.

"This has been a trully historic assembly. Being the first of its kind, we have moved from being passive victims of environmental mismanagement to being active players in the field of sustainable development".

Maria Neira, Director, Department of Protection of the Human Environment, World Health Organisation (WHO).



In Dr. Neira's view, the assembly brings together major stakeholders of the trade union movement. She further noted, "we need to emphasis standards for health workers. For this initiative to be successful, there is need to mobilise the international community, with the UN bodies taking a leading role. WHO has already taken very keen interest and is committed to participate throughout the process. Among the key outcomes of this assembly should be a strong network and clear action points".

Jim Baker, Director, Bureau for Workers' Activities Department, International Labour Organisation (ILO/ACTRAV)



Mr. Baker described the three day Assembly as a very dense programme covering extensive subjects and themes of the environment. "The programme involves Trade Unionists, Environmentalists as well as the Business Fraternity, among others. The environmental movement is a key ingredient to sustainability of this initiative. I expect one of the key outcomes of follow-up proposal. UN agencies need to work very closely together, beginning with ILO and WHO", he added.

Cornis J. van der Lugt, UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics



"The challenge of Enterprise Social Responsibility is integration. I look forward to discussions that focus on decent work within the context of sustainable development, taking the link between social care and environmental care as a given. I hope we can suggest practical ways for UNEP, ILO and the Trade Unions to work together in promoting sustainable production and consumption in all regions."

Guillermo Varela, Co-ordinator, Sub-Secretariat of Planning, Management and Environmental Quality, Argentine Government



"I came here in order to present a possible model of integration between the governments and the international workers' movement. I bring a message from the Argentine Government about the strengthening in Latin America of the issue of labour and the environment."