

T.Unions Tell CSD Governments to deal with climate, asbestos & AIDS:
“Break-Away From Spell-Bound Submission to Market Forces”

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Trade unionist Lucien Royer told government delegations at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) earlier today in New York that they “have fallen under a spell of a prevailing belief that the best thing they can do is to make themselves small, unleash the forces of the market, and then get out of the way”.

The representative of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) told a full room of government and Major Group representatives here at the UN that industrial policy remained a main driver for achieving sustainable energy objectives but that “assertive state and inter-state action was needed for new and considerable international regulation and constraints on the way markets work and on those who act in them”.

Royer was speaking as part of a multi stakeholder dialogue session with Governments about the world’s priorities for energy, climate change, atmospheres and industrial development. Governments from all countries are meeting this week to prepare a fuller policy meeting that will take place at the end of April here at the United Nations.

“We are faced with a critical situation –such as climate change- which constitutes the biggest market failure in history”, he said, and that “national industrial planning for production priorities, investment, industrial governance and corporate accountability must now be redirected to reinforce environmental protection and social cohesion”.

“The CSD must now speak up about how the ‘industrial relations’ between workers, their representatives and employer organizations should be turned into tools for joint implementation of solutions, through collective bargaining, partnership agreements and other legal structures related to the world’s workplaces” .

He said that workers must become engaged with their employers at the production level to reduce CO² emissions, eliminate other contaminants and in cleaning up the environment. “Effective training and education must serve to beef up their capacities” he said.

Royer warned that the next 10 years would usher intensive restructuring of industry, which must be guided by ‘just transition’ and democratically-determined policies to identify and address distributional effects – especially for the most vulnerable, including women, youth and the working poor.

Employment losses must be taken into account, he said, and job promotion made to catalyze labour intensive work in energy conservation, redesign & construction,

technology implementation, and transportation practice – all with the view to also eradicate poverty.

“Entire buildings and infrastructures must be redesigned, newly created, dismantled or moved yet past errors must not be repeated” he said. “Chemical compounds in existing structures must be handled properly and others like asbestos or mercury must be banned or eliminated completely”.

Royer also warned that Governments needed to take heed of the serious threat of HIV/AIDS in impeding progress on climate change and poverty eradication, especially now in Africa and in the not to distant future within many other countries of the world. “We call here on the G8 Summit next June to establish a high level working group to yearly examine progress in tackling this disease,” he emphasized.

He said the spell-bound character of governments to let loose market forces has led to the damaging trends of privatizing public utilities, “just when we need to instead define new roles for the public service, especially for improving access by poor and vulnerable groups to much needed resources and services”.

“In the absence of a significantly bold response to climate change and other catastrophes like HIV/AIDS, subsequent decisions could fall by default – to the disadvantage of us all”.

“climate change and our response to air pollution, and our need for industrial redesign must be placed in a context of sustainable development”, he concluded, saying that financial resources for social & environmentally friendly energy must be made to support synergies in addressing barriers and effectively promoting actions that CSD 2007 will eventually propose”.

For more information call

Anabella Rosemberg
OHS-Environment-Sustainable Development

Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC)
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

15, rue La Pérouse
75016 Paris - France
Tel: +33 1 55 37 37 37
Fax: +33 1 47 54 98 28
