

Climate Change and Energy Policies - WG Recommendations

Tuesday 17th January

Sophie Dupressoir, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) presented the report from the Working Group on Climate Change and Energy:

She said the focus of the discussions in the group had been mainly on how to identify practical ways of implementation, within the unions' membership, regarding energy and climate policies identified in the introductory text.

1. DISCUSSION ON THE INTRODUCTORY TEXT & BULLET POINTS:

Climate Change and equitable development:

Participants recognised that climate change concerned all countries worldwide, developed as well as developing countries, and the workers of these countries, although the challenges of climate change mitigation were not the same in developed and developing countries.

As Trade Union members, they believed that they should tackle the disparities existing between countries and within countries, regarding access to energy and the ability to achieve emissions reductions, in solidarity.

The Working Group also identified the following challenges related to climate change:

A. Climate Change and Globalisation:

Addressing climate change can improve poor working conditions in a number of sectors, such as exporting in developing countries (i.e. forestry), and the impact on quality of life in local communities. Tackling the specific problems of youth, notably unemployment, should also be considered by climate policies.

The Working Group said the current patterns of globalisation and competition between countries to attract capital were likely to undermine the international efforts to reduce the environmental impact on climate change. They recommended new global economic rules that give predominance to environmental and social standards over competition rules.

B. Energy:

The Working Group recommended Trade Unions adopt a broader view on Energy issues, including:

- Access to energy;
- Energy sources;
- Regulation of the public energy services, and
- An ethical and sustainable energy policy.

The choice between different sources of energy should ensure that each conventional source of energy addresses its own set of environmental issues (timber, biomass, nuclear, oil, and gas).

C. Tools and instruments for climate change mitigation:

One key issue is the need to change the patterns of production and consumption, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, including the responsibility of consumers.

Trade Union representatives emphasised their support for the Kyoto protocol as a binding instrument to achieve emissions reduction at the country level. The question of whether unions should support voluntary commitments (such as those proposed for the developing

countries in the Assembly Workbook) was discussed. One participant was of the opinion that the recently established Asian-Pacific Partnership (APP) should be closely monitored by the Trade Unions because it included some of the largest emitting countries in the world. The tools to achieve emissions reduction should include incentives to the companies using the best available technologies (BAT), and other tools to reduce CO2 emissions (i. e. via the European tradable permits system).

D. Impact of Climate Change (“adaptation”):

Climate change also has an impact on workers through the modification of the ecosystems that are the basis of the economic activity for many workers (i. e. on forestry, agriculture and fisheries).

The Working Group also noted that the Workbook focussed only on CO2, and that it should address all Greenhouse Gases. It called for the Assembly resolution to address all Greenhouse Gases, including Greenhouse Gas emissions from the agriculture and other industrial sectors.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS AT VARIOUS LEVELS:

To Trade Unions:

The Working Group noted that Trade Unions lack guidance on how to engage and convey the issue of Climate Change and Energy to the attention of their membership. Trade Unions would like to be provided with guidance on concrete processes for increasing workers' engagement in energy conservation and emissions reduction at the workplace. This will require additional resources.

The Working Group also emphasised the need for capacity building within Trade Unions, including the sharing of Best Practices and the development of common approaches to climate solutions. They pointed out that in countries where social dialogue was restricted, workers' education and awareness-raising should be the priority, and that Trade Unions should engage in broad alliances with environmental NGOs and other groups such as local and indigenous communities.

To Governments and Intergovernmental Organisations:

The Working Group recommended the following:

- Implement the UNEP/ILO MoU on Joint Co-operation;
- Undertake environmental impact studies, and pay due regard to their results when drafting their policies, and involve the Trade Unions;
- Work to redirect the funding of the international financial institutions towards environmental and social sustainability;
- WHO should pay more attention to the impact of climate change on workers' health, and international institutions such as the OECD should examine and publicize the impacts of climate change on employment;
- Local authorities and governments should refrain from engaging in energy privatisation when the impact on local communities is likely to be negative;
- Strict quality standards should be established to regulate the electricity market.

To Governments, Corporations and Trade Unions:

In line with the “just transition” paradigm, Trade Unions should be provided with and participate in the preparation of early warnings mechanisms and projections on future trends and future development scenarios in the different industrial sectors.

To NGOs:

NGOs should take employment into account in their programmes and campaigns. Experience shows that long lasting cooperation between the labour and environmental movements can

assist NGOs in incorporating employment issues into their programmes and campaigns.

The environmental movement should work hand in hand with organised labour when engaging with the private sector.

3. Implementation by Trade Unions:

Trade Union capacity building in climate change activities should include:

- Workers education and awareness-raising on climate change;
- Trade Union understanding and knowledge of possible scenarios related to climate change and development of the capacity to analyse information;
- A clearing-house mechanism for Trade Union experience-sharing; and
- The hiring of Trade Union environmental officers.

The Working Group expressed its view that climate change and energy issues should be included in the collective bargaining process.

Campaigning:

A campaign for Works Councils to have access to information within companies and to be consulted on Energy and Climate issues (i. e. the implementation of the Kyoto directive in Europe).