

## ADDRESS BY KLAUS TOEPFER, Executive Director, UNEP

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It is my pleasure to welcome you to this first Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment, here at UNEP, in this beautiful and hospitable land of Kenya.

Before addressing directly the issues here, I must inform you that we meet in a country where people are suffering as a result of drought.

We must show solidarity with the people of Kenya and the government during this very difficult time and must do all we can to ensure that people here get the food and the water

they so desperately need.

Then we must look to the underlying causes, which are numerous, but are also linked with the environment including deforestation and changes in land use which are playing their part into reducing the moisture, precipitation and rainfall in this potentially bountiful Kenya.

This three-day event is a unique platform for exchange with one the largest and most important stakeholders group in sustainable development, the trade unions and the workers they represent. We welcome here today some of the largest federations of Trade Unions, namely the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Confederation of Labour (WLC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD and the SustainLabour Foundation.

Today, we have 160 participants coming from all parts of the world, including 120 delegates from Trade Union organisations and federations representing more than 200 million workers from more than 154 countries to discuss issues of common interest on sustainable development. We wish to acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency the Minister of Environment of Spain who is showing her dedication to such issues of labour and the environment by attending this event.

This gathering is organized by UNEP, with the cooperation of SustainLabour and the Varda Group, under the premises that there is a natural synergy between Labour and Environment.

Indeed, sustainable development is based on three pillars equally critical: economic, social and environmental. It is of utmost importance to link economic production and social protection to environmental management. Reconciling those concerns is essential, especially in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals and the access to basic human rights such as access to health, education, water and sanitation, and energy. To solve this equation is the only mean to ensure long-term development, integrating an equitable industrial development and the management of common public goods.

In the past, UNEP has been involved in working with you through its Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) on (i) technology support and capacity building, (ii) the Marrakech process on sustainable production and consumption, (iii) the ten principles of the UN Global Compact, and (iv) sustainability reporting and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Guidelines including amongst its indicators reference to the core labour standards, Occupational Health & Safety issues.

This event adds another political dimension to that collaboration with the trade unions. As UNEP, we want to proactively engage with you as a means of strengthening participation and consultation with major groups of civil society, our "Natural Allies", in response to UNEP's strategy to enhance "opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation in design,

implementation, monitoring of activities, and dissemination of outputs" in our programme of work.

In this forum, you are invited to share your experiences and concerns, as well as identify the role that workers can play in the implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development.

The primary objectives of the Assembly will be to reinforce the social and labour dimension of environmental protection, to identify trade union objectives on environmental issues such as climate change, energy, chemicals, health, water, enterprise social responsibility, and to identify requisites for change such as in patterns of production and consumption and guarantee just transition measures, and to agree on recommendations to governments for taking into account trade union perspectives on environment and sustainable development.

The Assembly will debate and make recommendations on those environmentally related labour issues, including Trade Unions and worker participation in international environmental governance.

UNEP is happy to note that you have already agreed to launch your "Workers' Initiatives for a Lasting Legacy" (WILL) at this landmark date of January 2006. This will serve as a "Common Trade Union framework for workers' action for the environment and sustainable development" and we surely see this as the beginning of a new process for rapid change. UNEP fully supports this initiative and encourages trade unions to become involved with other stakeholders in such voluntary initiatives.

UNEP will look forward to this partnership on how we can, in concrete terms, assist trade unions in replicating the successful case studies scheduled to be presented at the Assembly.

UNEP will also be looking to other areas of mutual self interest including training and educating on the latest developments in international environmental law in areas such as the newly adopted chemicals treaties, for example the Persistent Organic Pollutant or Stockholm Convention.

We also hope to formalize this partnership through a publication around the Trade Union agenda towards sustainable industrial development for the next decade.

In 2002 in Johannesburg, it was agreed that 10-year Action Programmes on sustainable production and consumption patterns should be developed. Given your role in the work- and production-place, no one is better placed than you to promote sustainable production and consumption. From where you stand, from where you work and you act, you can really make a difference if you are ready for it.

In 2005 also, the United Nations inaugurated the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. With your role at the workplace, UNEP believes that you can make a huge difference to the success of the UN decade.

I wish to express UNEP's gratitude to ILO and WHO, our partners in this initiative, and the Global Compact for supporting this event. I would like to thank again the SustainLabour Foundation and the Varda Group for their co-operation in convening this event.

I wish you very successful debates. Thank you.