

## Incoming COP21 President supports Trade Union demands for a Just Transition

(18 September 2015) EPSU joined over 250 union leaders from across the world in demanding a just transition at the recent Trade Union Climate Submit in Paris. These calls were echoed by a broad alliance consisting of leading UN climate experts, environmental groups and most prominently the incoming COP21 President Laurent Fabius who stressed that the “role of trade unions will be absolutely decisive” in mobilising workers and reaching a positive climate agreement at COP21.

The opening message of the Conference – that humanity has a rendez-vous with itself – was spelled out in no uncertain terms as prominent UN scientist Merlyn Van Voore, the CEO’s of WWF, Greenpeace, and Save the Rainforest, and trade union delegates from the Philippines, Ghana and Brazil illustrated the immediate consequences of climate change. From tsunamis to typhoons, to droughts and deforestation – the devastating and deadly reality was clear to see.

“If mother Earth was a bank it would be saved” were the words of Jonathan Neele from the “One million Jobs Campaign” as he led the call for action and outlined how we can solve the problem in 20 years through co-ordinated public investment in renewable energies, public transport and the retro-fitting of buildings. The link between climate action and the common fight for workers rights, equality and social justice was also repeatedly emphasised. Speakers and delegates were in clear agreement that current limitations are not technical nor financial – but solely political.

The need to locate a just transition firmly within the public sector and the harsh lessons of the privatization of common goods were also recurrent themes. For instance, Diego Azzi from CUT in Brazil explained the consequences of PPP on water services in his city Sao Paulo which has seen “the profits privatized and the costs socialized”. He described how this essential human right - which EPSU has successfully fought to preserve in the EU with the [\*\*Right2Water campaign\*\*](#) - has

been cut-off and rationed to the poor in order to preserve the privilege of access to the rich.

In the keynote speech, Fabius acknowledged that unions are “on the front line of industrial transformations that lie ahead, whether in coal mining, power generation or industrial sectors”. Both in retraining and new job creation he stressed how “unions are in a great position to be part of the transformation that workers are facing” while he supported the demand for a just transition.

Speaking at the conclusion of conference Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the ITUC expressed how “unions have been disappointed to see that workers and their families have been left out of the draft climate agreement and have called on the French Presidency to ensure just transition language is reinstated”. The Trade Union Climate Summit endorsed three topline demands for the Paris Agreement calling on governments to:

- put back the language of just transition that has been stripped from the draft agreement;
- raise ambition before 2020 and invest in the potential of jobs and climate action and commit to a binding review of effort;
- support the most vulnerable with the promised financial commitments.

Unions have committed to mobilise workers to take part in global climate rallies on 28th and 29th November, which will send a message to world leaders arriving in Paris that climate change is happening now and that people expect an agreement which reduces emissions and puts us on a pathway to limit global temperature rises to 2 degrees Celsius or under.

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