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**TSS 20/10/2021**

**Speech Esther Lynch  
ETUC Deputy General Secretary**

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Responding to Covid demonstrated what we all know and agree to be true – that involving workers and their unions through social dialogue and collectively bargained solutions is a prerequisite for managing change.

But there is a gap between the knowing and the doing. A gap between the talk and the walk. Sometimes the gap is so wide that it is impossible to see to the other side.

**What we need are bridges.**

**Firstly, respect for the prerogatives of trade unions** : this means that the EU, its Member States and employers must stop putting into question the legitimacy of trade unions as the representatives of the workers and must genuinely involve us in practice.

**Secondly, we need Credible Just Transition Plans**: workers and their trade unions need to be involved at an advanced and early stage. It is too late when workers have lost their jobs and communities are devastated to only then set up task forces. The plan should foresee the impacts on employment, the skills needs, retraining requirements and the guarantees of security that will be provided to workers directly and indirectly affected. We need to move from talking about the need for just digital and climate transitions to concrete plans at company, sector region and national level. EU Social Partners have taken up our responsibility and have agreed a blue print for a just digital transition. Our Framework Agreement on Digitalisation is already having an impact but needs more active support.

Thirdly we need a **Jobs strategy with specific targets for creating Good Green Jobs**: it is not enough to promise jobs without setting out how many and the measures that will guarantee that the terms and conditions and the pay will be as good as the existing industries.

It is not a just transition if workers end up paying for it, it will be soul destroying and feed distrust if workers retrain for jobs that do not exist or have such reduced pay and terms and conditions.

We, the European social partners, are currently negotiating our next work programme and it is imperative that the commitments we negotiate support and empower workers through a just transition process.

Finally, I would like to underline the need for a Commission Communication to provide clear, transparent and reliable rules on the Commission's obligation to put forward social partner agreements for adoption in binding forms.

Social Partners need to be fully involved in developing this Communication, and while we look forward to hearing more about your plans, we urge caution about adopting a regulatory approach.