

**International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)¹
European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)²
Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC)³**

Preventing Disruption & Enhancing Community Cohesion
Social & Employment Transition for Climate Change

**Trade Union Statement to COP11/MOP1⁴ Montreal, Canada (29 November - 9 December, 2005)
(United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC)**

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Hurricanes Katrina & Rita point to the alarming trends for social and employment disruption from climate events

Yet trade unions want to be a source of inspiration and hope, through models of union engagement that can make a difference.

1. 355,000 workers initially lost their jobs due to the recent hurricanes in the United States, resulting in a net loss in employment of about 40,000⁵. This is a stark portent of things to come, especially if one considers the warning issued recently by the UN University's Institute for Environment Security that as many as 50 million people world-wide will be displaced in the next five years due to climate change and other environmental factors. The implications for employment and community disruption are staggering, especially knowing that climate events will impact on every nation of the world.

2. Yet Kyoto gives all of us an initial way out. Its implementation could improve the quality of life and health of the world's peoples, at least for those living in cities. As a result industry and transportation would produce much less pollution. So, we could all breathe cleaner air. Resources currently devoted to private forms of transport could instead support modern and accessible public systems and foster the redesign of cities and land planning. Communities could become more human-sized, with networks of parks that allow people many more possibilities to get around without damaging the environment. Poverty and inequality could be addressed by everyone, through policies that deliver real change and provide food, housing and access to resources and services.

3. However, public support for action on climate change must be strengthened. Policies must be instituted to counter the fear of potential loss of livelihood, lowering of living standards, and perceived threats to vital support systems and other elements of the social fabric that could continue to inhibit the formation of a broad consensus over climate change. This paper highlights the role of social dialogue in tackling climate change, roles that include positive models of union engagement.

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⁴ Canada will host the first meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP1) in Montreal in conjunction with the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the Climate Change Convention.

⁵ CBS News, Washington, Oct. 20, 2005

Global Unions support the UNFCCC & Kyoto Protocol through recognition of common but differentiated responsibilities for all countries

4. If green house gas (GHG) emissions fall, as they should under the Kyoto Protocol, developing countries, where two billion people lack modern energy services, could increase their emissions until at least mid century while still achieving acceptable GHG stabilization. All future agreements under the climate treaty must include both industrialized and developing country commitments for GHG reductions. However, the principle of *common but differentiated responsibilities* must be our guidepost for planning change; one that foresees rapid reductions everywhere in the carbon intensity of production and transportation, whilst levying the cost of change on those with the greatest capacity to pay.

The success of implementation will depend on the concrete action of workers

5. At its World Congress in December 2004 the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) called upon all countries to work together in negotiations within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change concerning implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, especially with respect to addressing social issues. The years 2008-2012 mark the end of the 1st commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Achieving effective implementation of the Kyoto Protocol will require measures after that period, for the long term, and trade unions support continued negotiations about climate change to extend the Kyoto Protocol beyond the current commitment years .

6. The success of implementation strategies for climate change depends in large measure on the engagement of workers, their trade unions, and employers to achieve adopted specific targets at their workplaces, sector by sector. Workplaces burn energy, consume resources and generate waste. Clear workplace targets on energy efficiency and waste minimisation should be linked to sectoral and national carbon reduction and waste reduction strategies

Workplace actions can provide a basis for community education and action to implement outcomes related to climate change

7. However, to transform the potential resistance to climate change into active engagement, workers must feel confident that their jobs or livelihoods are secured. And this can be made possible through concrete steps that are outlined in the illustration boxes of this document. Climate change implementation measures must focus on the world's workplaces, as they are at the hub of production and, as we will see later, a vehicle for changes to consumption patterns. Effective change in the workplace can only be achieved with the full "engagement" of workers and trade unions. However the resolution of climate change issues is not simply workplace-based. It is crucial that governments develop policies and strategies to win the hearts and minds of the public-at-large, especially on the importance of modifying their individual life style patterns. To put this in place, mechanisms for social dialogue must be entrenched in implementation practice.

Joint UK Government & Trade Union Committee Adopts Twin-Track Policy & Workplace Approaches

In March 2005 a national "GreenWorks" conference aimed at trade unions from across industry and services in the public and private sectors was hosted by a joint government-trade union committee to strengthen union workplace and policy engagement in sustainable development issues, including energy and climate change. The *Trade Unions for Sustainable Development Advisory Committee* (TUSDAC) was set up in 1998 and is jointly chaired by a Government Minister and a Trade Union General Secretary.

The conference focused on the role of workplace environmental representatives and on negotiating sustainable framework agreements with employers. Numerous case studies highlighted concrete energy-savings and environmental protection examples within the economy and helped formulate directions for government policies. They highlighted the importance of workforce engagement and consultation, joint environmental agendas with management, and good terms and conditions of work, as well as the wider responsibilities for local and global communities. The conference emphasized the importance of building union capacity and developing proper training and learning skills.

The GreenWorks conference was a key event for TUSDAC. A consultation report was launched, *Greening The Workplace*, and several new initiatives related to energy and transportation have already been launched, some involving employer organizations and Government.

Social dialogue that includes models of union engagement can make a tremendous difference to outcomes

8. A new workplace culture must be an objective of climate change programmes⁶, one that is well illustrated by the above case study in the U.K. Preconditions such as the "the right to participation", the "right-to-know", "whistle-blower" protection, the "right to refuse dangerous work", and the "right to refuse work which harms the environment" are important, and have implications for ensuring effective compliance with protocol rules and measures. These provide tools for workplace engagement and eliminate possible abuse of trust though legislative frameworks. For this reason, a broad range of industrial relations issues require examination, as they relate to sustainable development. In this regard, the UNFCCC is asked to note the 2.3 million collective agreements that are in place around the world, which attest directly to worker/employer cooperation in the workplace. For this reason, the UNFCCC must take heed of the WSSD call to integrate country support of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and promote implementation of the international labour standards that the Declaration refers to.

Argentinian Trade Unions & Government Reach Sustainable Development Agreement

At the end of June 2005 the *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT) signed an agreement with the national government of Argentina to jointly implement agreed measures to address environmental issues. On 6 May, 2005 a first workshop on "The World of Work and Sustainable Development" was hosted by the CGT with its affiliates to design an initial programme of action, with a particular emphasis on environmental issues in relation to the promotion of equity issues.

The CGT had co-hosted a trade union workshop with SustainLabour on the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) last December at the global climate change meeting (COP10). Through this agreement with the government, the CGT and its affiliates will become involved for the first time in dealing with environmental issues.

⁶ *Development of Environmental Competence*, Danish Confederation of Trade Unions in cooperation with the Danish Technological Institute and Technical University of Denmark, June 2000.

Worker participation can yield sizeable impacts on both production and consumption

9. Workplace programmes should encourage workers and their representatives to work with employers to identify where performance can be improved. Joint target-setting, monitoring, record-keeping, and implementation should be encouraged as crucial aspects of management systems for the environment, or health and safety, in conjunction with collective agreements or other special partnership arrangements. Such assessments should be linked to and evaluated by community organisations and local government. Governments, such as in the Argentina agreement in the above box, can begin the process by initially undertaking simple steps to foster a process that can grow.

10. Workers and employers must become more responsible personal consumers of energy and other resources. Workplace actions can serve as a springboard to influence consumption at the community level. Since three-quarters of all greenhouse gases come from manufacturing, energy production or supply, transport and construction, workplace actions could become instruments of change in these sectors, including personal energy consumption by workers traveling to and from work.

Training & awareness raising are essential ingredients

11. The result of involvement of workers and their representatives in environmental and workplace issues depends on the levels of training and education available to them. Every opportunity should be taken to raise awareness among employees and their representatives of the challenges of climate change, and the energy and resource changes at work that will be involved. We would strongly urge the development of union education programmes that seek to raise awareness of, and engagement in, climate change issues, related both to community and workplace-based environmental issues.

12. Where voluntary measures seek to change workplace performance and behaviour, joint monitoring and reporting procedures must be developed and implemented by workers and employers. Effectiveness and appropriate inspection systems and education for capacity-building must be considered as a means of strengthening these functions, especially in developing countries.

Jobs will be lost and new ones created by climate change and mitigation measures

13. Current figures suggest slightly positive net growth in world employment in the longer term when job losses due to climate events are measured against jobs that will be created by the opportunities to develop green manufacturing industries in support of renewable energies such as wind, wave, tidal and solar power; biofuels, cleaner coal technology and other energy sources that can be made to support mitigation measures. Many jobs will likely be created within any scenario for change, e.g. as many as 800,000 in Europe and 155,000 in Germany alone by the end of this year 2005⁷, particularly within the renewable energy sector. Such potential exists in many regions of the world.

⁷ European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Brussels, Belgium 2002.

Positive employment transition policies can make a difference

14. However, sector-by-sector and regional analyses show that turbulent times are coming in the short term, if large numbers of workers lose their jobs and livelihoods, with little access to the new jobs that will be created. This presents a challenge which COP11 must address, if it wishes to build up public confidence for national efforts to address climate change. Green job creation, combined with re-employment programmes, training and education, and bridging compensation – in other words, employment transition programmes - can address this problem and allay worker concerns. The ETUC project described in the box below illustrates how concrete steps can be taken to better understand and plan positive change.

**European Governments and Unions
Assess Employment and Climate Change Synergies**

A ten month study on the impacts of climate change and CO2 reduction policies on employment and other activities in 25 EU countries will soon be conducted under the auspices of the European Agency SDA and jointly undertaken by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), French consultancy SYNDEX, the German Wuppertal Institute and the Spanish institute ISTAS. The project is co-financed by the European Commission and Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Spain and the U.K.

One aspect of the study will focus on the post Kyoto 2012 and 2030 horizons. It will study the production and consumption impacts in eleven EU countries within several industrial sectors, including transport, construction and housing. The study will assess the impacts of inaction and climatic disruption on employment and other activities within the EU structural funds.

A main objective is to provide an information base for the ETUC to formulate policy and make recommendations about the institutional and political directions that would be needed to institute a 'just energy transition' plan. In addition, the purpose is to promote dialogue among actors and social partners, within sectors, countries and the EU region about employment and climate change and to integrate the concern about social impacts of climate change within the EU financial framework.

15. The WSSD has issued a call to strengthen national and regional research and development institutions for socially-acceptable sustainable development. The UNFCCC and national government must encourage more research co-operation between the ILO, OECD, European Union, UNEP and other bodies to address employment issues related to climate change. A clear focus is needed on employment-related aspects, the social dimension and poverty eradication.

Governments must take leadership in ensuring 'just employment transition'

16. Governments must take the lead in ensuring that the transition towards a low carbon economy is a 'just transition', supported by investments in new technology, education and training, and by worker involvement and acceptance of the need for change and the job gains as well as losses that will be involved. Financial and economic measures must be identified to support income protection within a programme of sustainable job creation and promotion. Governments should be encouraged to ratify ILO Employment Policy Convention No. 122 and be guided by its Recommendation in devising steps for effective employment transition.

Governments must create frameworks to involve workers and trade unions

17. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) called on Governments to take steps to ensure that industrial development contributes to poverty eradication and sustainable natural resource management. The role of government in putting this into practice, within the context of climate change, must be emphasised. The very fabric of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol as-

sume that governments will provide this type of leadership. The Spanish case study below is a case in point. Other examples show possible trends. For example in Belgium, the Flemish government has formalized an extensive consultation and discussion process with representatives of civil society (employers and environmental associations, trade union, etc.) about climate change, in a very significant bottom-up approach that will be the subject of a special presentation at COP11.

Spanish Government, Unions & Business Create Tripartite Climate Change Plan

A trend-setting framework agreement to institutionalize joint oversight of national compliance to the Kyoto Protocol has been adopted by the Spanish government, along with the leading trade union and business organisations in the country. A “Framework to Institutionalize and Organise Social Dialogue, related to the Compliance with the Kyoto Protocol” was negotiated and signed late last March in Madrid, according to information recently made available in English. Both the Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO.) and Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) are party to the agreement, along with the national government and the two leading business organizations in Spain.

The new Framework has been set up in connection to Spain’s climate change ‘National Allocation Plan’, established to guide national efforts to achieve the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol. The Spanish national Framework was set up to strengthen compliance and identify opportunities and adverse impacts, including social and employment impacts of adaptation and mitigation measures.

The agreement creates a platform for tripartite social dialogue on climate change, bringing the Parties together around an umbrella ‘Dialogue Table’ that will undertake responsibility for monitoring and assessment of issues to guide national compliance. In the words of the framework document, the Parties believe that Kyoto is an opportunity to build a “sustainable development model and productive system” and to “generate better employment and raise the level of social cohesion”.

A striking feature of the agreement is that it aims to “prevent, avoid or reduce the potentially adverse social effects that could result from compliance with the Kyoto Protocol, in particular those related to competitiveness and employment.”

The agreement creates an obligation for the umbrella body to create subsidiary ‘Dialogue Tables’ within seven identified industrial sectors, each with the power and responsibility to act and make recommendations. The Ministries of Finance, Industry, Commerce, Labour and Environment have formal representation in the umbrella Table with appropriate powers and responsibilities to act with designated industrial sectors, covered by subsidiary Tables.

The Kyoto Mechanisms should seek to implement social and employment policy, in tandem with climate targets

18. Moreover, such government leadership must translate into the day-to-day practice of implementing flexible mechanisms. A commitment to eradicate poverty and promote equality necessitates the integration of the social dimension⁸ and concrete steps must be incorporated within the implementation of the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM's), Joint Implementation (JI), Emissions Trading (ET). This requires, inter alia, the development of social indicators and other tools that reflect broad societal values and norms. Moreover, the UNFCCC should provide information to governments regarding the positive experiences of some countries in this regard (see box below).

⁸ “**Social Dimensions**” refers to alleviation of poverty, security of livelihood, access to food, energy, shelter, water, health & welfare, social security, sanitation, education, transport, and incorporates protection of basic human and economic freedoms as enshrined in international Conventions and Protocols. Climate change and mitigation efforts will likely have tremendous social consequences that are not currently factored into estimates for predicting the costs and benefits of proposals. An attempt should be made to predict the nature and scope of the need for social transition programmes and to assess the financial and economic measures required to support them (e.g. for compensation, training and education, industry, and government planning).

Belgium's CDM and JI Projects Include Social Criteria & Trade Union Involvement

A new policy by Belgium shows how the 'flexible mechanisms' (the CDM and JI) can be made to support social and employment policy. Under the current rules for the 2008-2012 year period, Belgium must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7.5% (compared to their 1990 levels). To do so it has included a set of social criteria within the terms of its call for tenders to purchase greenhouse gas emission quotas.

Belgium expects as a first step to finance Kyoto Protocol JI/CDM projects which are generated from electricity to the tune of €9.3 million, payment of which will initially be generated from an electricity consumption tax. A call for the submission of projects was launched last Spring, following the recommendations of a technical committee composed of government, trade union, employer and NGO representatives.

As a result, Belgium's Council of Ministers is now seeking to achieve a balance between economic, environmental and social impacts, through the implementation of the flexible mechanisms. Thus, to be accepted, project proponents must respect the principles of the OECD's Guidelines for Multinationals, the eight basic Conventions of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and ILO Conventions 155 on Occupational Health and Safety and 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

Employment rates, quality and skills development must be observed. Proponents must show compliance to labour standards and ensure access to essential services, including energy. They must develop a plan for monitoring the environmental, social and economic impact of the project. Where pre-financing of the project is desired, trade unions must be involved in monitoring. See: <http://www.klimaat.be/jicdmtender/indexB.htm>.

19 The recent G8 Summit officially recognized that climate change is happening, that human activity is contributing to it and that there is a need to take urgent action. This is a significant political breakthrough. However, it must now translate into concrete and measurable steps for reducing CO₂ in industrialised countries first of all and by promoting a balance of reductions world-wide in the long term.

The 2005 G8 Summit has called for action in transforming the way we use energy, powering a cleaner future, promoting R&D, financing transition to cleaner energy, managing the impact of climate change, and tackling illegal logging

20. Technology is available to avoid a carbon intensive future by applying policy instruments in combination with currently available technologies, such as:

- *Energy efficiency and conservation* through higher fuel efficiency of vehicles, increased use of mass transportation, high efficiency building construction and more efficient coal-fired power plants, combined with micro generation strategies for households;
- *Investments in a mix of clean, green and sustainable energy sources*, with sustainable electricity and fuels, including wind power, solar power, some forms of biomass, clean coal, microhydro energy, advanced technology vehicles, and natural gas, especially for transitional purposes.

21. In addition, prior research and analysis must be the basis for developing or using new and emerging technologies in environmentally sound ways, such as,

- *Efficient Combined Heat and Power plants (CHP) and fuel cells*, of various sizes according to demand for power and heat;
 - *Carbon dioxide capture and storage* at power plants, hydrogen plants, and synfuel plants, and sequestering the CO₂ in subsurface geologic reservoirs;
- Sequestration of carbon in forests and soils* by reducing deforestation and increasing forestation and conservation tillage.

German & Belgian Trade Unions Work With Their Governments on Energy Planning & Conservation

GOOD EXAMPLE OF WISE INVESTMENTS: In September 2005, the Belgian government agreed to a plan proposed by the *Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique* (FGTB) to establish an energy conservation fund financed by the federal authorities, primarily for the housing sector, to help households invest in energy efficiency, with a priority on the most efficient investments and to households with lower incomes.

This Belgian proposal was inspired by a very significant experience developed in Germany, where the national trade union centre DGB with the German unions are collaborating with government, environmental NGO's and employers' federations in a programme to renovate buildings, contributing to climate protection, whilst creating sustainable jobs. The Alliance for Work and Environment aimed to renovate 300,000 apartments, create 200,000 jobs, reduce 2 million t/a CO2 emissions and lower heating bills for tenants, landlords, and the State by about US\$4 billion, through reduction of unemployment costs and increased income taxes etc. These effects are also predicted in a study of a joint project, *The renovation of a building – A chance for climate protection*, and the labour market conducted by Greenpeace Germany and the German Trade Union IG BAU. The immediate objective was to improve insulation of buildings, advanced heating technologies, and use of renewable energy, such as photovoltaic or solar thermal systems. Thousands of new jobs were anticipated in the construction, heating, sanitary and air-conditioning sectors, as well as in building services. Financing for the programme is provided by the German government, which will spend less than US\$1,8 billion in a 5 year period. In addition, a total of US\$8 billion will have been made available through credits at favorable rates of interest.

22. The Marrakesh Accords provide proposed developing expertise for technology transfer issues among developing countries through a reporting process, information and development guidelines, reporting methodologies and ways to minimize adverse social, environmental and economic impacts on developing countries by Parties, in Annex I. For full value this work must be linked to employment policy, reporting and assessment initiatives on an ongoing basis.

Spanish Unions Tackle Climate Change Through Work-Related Transportation Approaches⁹

The *Union General de Trabajadores* (UGT) and the *Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras* (CC OO) have cooperated with local Environment Councils and local government to raise awareness about urban transport, and generate worker and workplace-centred solutions. “*Día europeo sin coches*” (22 September) features a day to carry on life without the private automobile, and has spread across the European Union. Automobiles are banned (with exceptions for emergency, supply, handicapped, etc.) in certain zones of the city, and arrangements are made with local businesses and residents to avoid unnecessary disruptions. Not only does it raise public awareness; it also allows partners to experiment with alternate ways of designing urban affairs, e.g., planning of stations for proper intermodal connections. The two union bodies have also produced *Del transporte al centro de trabajo* as a guide and educational support for union members to examine problems of urban transport, particularly as they relate to workers traveling long distances to work, because of patterns of urban planning and land use. It proposes solutions and practical alternatives that can be promoted through collective bargaining, etc. They also work with the Institute for Energy Alternatives (IDEA) to save energy and provide for more sustainable forms of transportation to and from work.

⁹ For other examples regarding the involvement of workers in transportation issues, see presentations from Italy and Germany at the OECD meeting in Paris: *High Level Special Session on Transportation – OECD Environment Policy Committee* (EPOC), 12 November, 2003

***UNFCCC
technology transfer,
innovation &
capacity building
policies must meet
WSSD & employ-
ment objectives***

23. Social and employment impacts of new technology or technology transfer must be addressed as a precondition to their promotion. Public funding for research and development in this area must serve to predict and prevent negative social impacts.

24. For these reasons, innovation and technology transfers should take place within a framework of government regulation, procurement and investment. Government policy should set relevant targets and ensure that new technology actually serves to ensure compliance with its objectives. Capacity- building must be promoted for workers, i.e. education, and participatory mechanisms to allow them to participate fully in the decision-making concerning the planning and implementation of technological change.

**Trade Union Country-by-Country Profiling on Climate Change
Mainstreamed by the United Nations**

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has launched its own web page to highlight the trade union “country-by-country profiling” process, which has produced evaluation reports of government and company performance related to Climate & Energy issues among other matters, related to industrial development.

See: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mgroups/tu_cprofiles.

The aim of the Profiles is to create common national frameworks for action that distinguish the realities of workers, country-by-country. The special “Sustainable Development (SD) Profiles” act as a centre-piece, linking all other profiles to a coherent integration process, which incorporates occupational, environmental and social policy. See the following:

2005 UNFCCC COP11 Climate & Energy Profiles:

http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpP_9b.EN.pdf.

2006 CSD Sustainable Development and Energy Profiles (Draft Stage):

http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpO_1d.EN.pdf.

2004 UNFCCC COP10 Climate & Energy Profiles:

(English version): http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpP_9a.EN.pdf.

(Spanish version): http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpP_9a.SP.pdf.

***The Subsidiary
Bodies must strive
for a broader
understanding of
adaptation &
response measures.***

25. The COP7 and COP8 provide the mandate to review the social impacts of adaptation. Therefore, the Subsidiary Bodies of the UNFCCC should incorporate the following:

- Social Dialogue that involves Civil Society, including trade unions in decision-making and action are necessary preconditions for successful adaptation and mitigation responses. Whatever the specific initiative undertaken by governments to determine future carbon energy scenarios, trade unions and workers must be consulted and engaged in energy policymaking. Positive case studies involving workers and trade unions must be developed and shared among country delegations,
- Capacity-building support from national Governments must be made to help develop workforce engagement in climate change initiatives at work, in addition to other measures,

¹¹ ***Livelihoods and Climate Change*** – Combining disaster risk reduction, natural resource management and climate change adaptation in a new approach to the reduction of vulnerability and poverty, IUCN, SEI, IISD and Inter-Cooperation, Winnipeg, Canada, 2003

- Workplaces, Workers and the World of Work are instruments for achieving synergies at the national level. The right of workplace representatives to take up and advance climate change and energy issues in their workplace, as an addition to their current range of duties as shop stewards and health and safety representatives must be recognized,
- Adaptation & Response measures must embody livelihood¹¹, employment, social access, human displacement & security issues,
- Governments must become directly involved in investment, procurement, regulation and overall coordination and in land-use planning for effective social transition measures.

26. Governments and other intergovernmental bodies must be encouraged to improve their collective understanding of the social dimensions of climate change and the redistributive effects of mitigation and adaptation measures, and be prepared to report progress to future COP meetings of the UNFCCC, as part of a review outlined in Article 4.2.f. of the UNFCCC.

Article 4.1.f of UNFCCC:
"All Parties shall take climate change considerations into account (...) in their relevant social, economic and environmental policies & actions" relevant social, economic and environmental policies & actions."

Articles 2.3 & 3.14 of the Kyoto Protocol:
"Each Party (...) shall strive to implement the commitments (...) to minimize the adverse social, environmental & economic impacts on developing country parties".

UNEP To Host First Trade Union Assembly On Labour & Environment

The power and influence of organized labour is being enlisted in the battle for planet Earth. The first global Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment is to take place at the Kenyan headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) between 15-17 January 2006.

Klaus Toepfer, UNEP's Executive Director, said: "The notion that there are tough choices between jobs and the environment is outdated as this important Assembly shows. ... Indeed, environmental management and tackling environmental issues can be a source of new and cleaner industries and jobs. Take global warming as one example. Industries that reduce their dependency on fossil fuels by being more energy efficient can save on fuel bills, making them more competitive in the market-place," he added.

"New, climate friendly technologies such as renewable energy, fuel cells and energy saving measures and gadgets are also spawning new businesses which in turn mean more and alternative employment. Trades Unions have an important role to play in this, helping to push employers to raise the environmental standards of goods and services and environmental health standards in the work place," said Mr Toepfer.

Trade unionists from across the globe will be attending the historic Assembly where they will adopt recommendations and commitments on labour, the environment and sustainable development. See www.will2006.org. Debates and recommendations at the Assembly will cover issues ranging from the implications of global climate change for the world of work and the prevention of hazardous chemicals in the workplace up to occupational, public and environmental health, Trade union actions for equal and sustainable access and management to resources and services, and Trade union and worker participation in environmental governance, and corporate social responsibility and accountability.