



European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)  
Confédération européenne des syndicats (CES)

Intervention by:

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**UGT-E 40 Confederal Congress  
“Employment First”**

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## **UGT-E 40 Confederal Congress** **“Employment First”**

Candido, delegates, friends, I bring thanks and greetings from the European Trade Union Confederation to the UGT Spain.

I bring you thanks because you are one of the most loyal and constant supporters of the work of the ETUC. You are not a fair weather friend. You are a companion and a comrade for all seasons – and I know that on behalf of the ITUC, Guy Ryder feels the same way.

That loyalty and support is offered generously on your behalf by Candido and by Manuel Bonmati and their staff. Candido is our senior vice President and our former President. Widely respected, carefully listened to, your President, my friend Candido, is a rock on which to build our trade union work in Europe.

I have compared Manuel Bonmati before to Candido’s Sancho Panza. That’s not quite fair. But his skill, his character, his devotion to duty are of great service to the ETUC as well as to the UGT, Spain and I am glad that he will take on another mandate.

Because we need all the skills, all our wits, all our courage, all our solidarity as we face the future.

- A future of recession and job loss
- A future of crisis and inevitable attacks from anti-democrats
- A future which has disturbing echoes of the 1930s; you in Spain know all too well that disastrous decade.

Financial capitalism, which fuelled job growth and a burst of prosperity in most of Europe, has now had a heart attack. As our leaders meet in London on Thursday, they have to take financial capitalism into intensive care to avoid a relapse.

We wish them well. We cannot afford this Summit to fail. In 1933, there was another London conference to tackle recession. It failed and shortly afterwards, democracy failed in Germany. The rest we all know about. The tragic history is engraved in our hearts and in our minds.

I have been engaged in meetings with Europe's leaders pressing for European solidarity and for common action.

Pressing for an expanded recovery plan, funded by European bonds if necessary.

Pressing for a New Social Deal which puts workers first, not bankers and their bonuses – a new Social Deal which puts jobs and equality at the heart of a new world order.

Pressing for no return to business as usual in capital markets.

For too long, the world has been run by the lords of Wall Street and the City of London.

For too long, the Left has been patronised by sermons preaching the superiority of de-regulation, excessive liberalisation and shareholder value as the sole goal of companies.

To these people, trade unions were seen as a pest, an awkward obstacle to the smooth operation of the market. We were old fashioned, in the way, the grit in the oyster.

Well, now they must know different. Now they must know that this recession is their fault. Now they must know that they have failed on a spectacular scale.

Yet many of them are shameless, still seeking bonuses even though their company is bankrupt, still seeking “golden parachutes” even though their performance was a maximum, grade A disaster.

To all that – we say no! We say never again! We say goodbye to that world of government of the people by the bankers for the bankers.

Instead we say yes to the public interest, yes to democracy, yes to trade unionism!

Now we again take the offensive – as we resolved to do at the Congress in Seville in 2007. We will take the offensive on the streets of Madrid on May 14 rejecting unemployment and precarious work, pressing for tough regulation of capitalism, and calling for a new European Social Deal.

We are rejecting the timid complacency of the European authorities who have downgraded the proposed Jobs Summit on May 7 – they have downgraded the unemployed, not just the summit. They just hope meekly for the best while rejecting decisive action. On May 14 therefore – and on May 15 in Brussels, and on May 16 in Berlin and Prague, they will hear the voice of the streets.

On Tuesday, the OECD forecast social unrest. Let me say that if the European authorities don't listen and act, that is what they will get. That's not a threat, that is a fact!

This crisis is crying out for more international and European solidarity; more co-ordinated help for the worst hit; and more assistance for workers to maintain jobs and purchasing power.

It is also calling for action to stop the European Court of Justice deciding that free markets are more important than workers' fundamental rights. That's not our Europe; and we reject it.

So, Congress, this is a fight we cannot avoid. This is a fight for workers' jobs, for their pay, for their rights, for their dreams.

We shall not fail them. Not the ETUC. Not the UGT. Not Spanish trade unionism. We go forward together and we go in solidarity and in strength, determined as always to win.

Thank you for your support.