

Copenhagen climate conference fails to deliver a satisfactory deal to cut greenhouse gases: unions

At the close of the Copenhagen conference, world leaders must move to resume negotiation to tackle climate change, before it is too late, say unions.

“This conference has fallen short of an agreement on ambitious targets for emissions reductions and the binding deal that leaders needed to reach to start turning around the build-up of greenhouse gas emissions,” said ACTU President Sharan Burrow, an official observer of the United Nations’ talks.

The ACTU and the global organisation for unions, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) called world leaders’ attention to the UN’s scientific advice that in order to avoid irreversible and catastrophic temperature increase, far-reaching and binding targets for greenhouse gas emissions by industrialised countries by 2020 were required, combined with ambitious and verifiable actions in developing nations.

“Furthermore, pledges by industrialised countries to provide assistance for adaptation and mitigation measures by developing countries still falls short of the minimum level estimated by the United Nations,” said Ms Burrow, who is also President of ITUC.

One of the sole positive features of the Copenhagen negotiations concerned the support from many governments to including reference to decent work and just transition for the workforce within the framework of the UN’s efforts on climate change.

Addressing the Plenary, Ms Burrow said: “We would like to express our satisfaction that this process has recognised the importance of calling for a just transition as a driver for decent work and good quality job creation. We thank those parties that understood the potential of this paragraph for building a broad support for climate action.”

But she said unless further negotiations were based on such text this commitment to a ‘just transition’ was now at risk.

The ITUC reiterated that the restricted access of civil society and NGO representatives to the UN conference centre was unacceptable.

“It is vital that when negotiations resume at the UNFCCC and at the COP16 meeting in Mexico next year, the access of civil society representatives be guaranteed once again,” Ms Burrow said.

“Unions are deeply disappointed at the clear differences between governments that persist and have resulted in the world leaving Copenhagen without an acceptable deal.

“We need a binding agreement that delivers a habitable planet, decent work, binding emissions reductions and financial support for the most vulnerable.

“We call on world leaders to meet again within months to meet the expectations of the world’s people and conclude such a treaty.”

Media contact: Mark Phillips ph: (03) 8676 7266 or 0422 009 011; email: mphillips@actu.asn.au