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EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

Speech of Harald WIEDENHOFER, Secretary General of EFFAT, for the World Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen

Exactly two months ago, on 15 September, the World Bank published its World Development Report 2010.

The 2 key messages in that report were:

1. Developing countries will have to bear 70-80% of the costs of climate change and the destruction of our environment.
2. Climate change will only widen the gulf between the rich and poor.

Climate change is bound to have a massive impact on food production.

The days of global food surpluses are over.

While clearing tropical forests for crop farming is a question of survival, hunger and poverty are key causes of climate change and the destruction of our environment.

In other words, battling hunger and poverty is part of the fight against climate change.

This makes efforts to ensure strong trade unions and the worldwide implementation of IAA standards an essential prerequisite for combating climate change.

And it also makes us unions indispensable partners of the environmental movement.

We urgently need a 'green deal'. Our aim is to achieve growth **not in spite of but through sustainable development.**

This new path to growth calls for a new business model, a paradigm shift, a new way of working, consuming and living, which makes climate change not just an ecological challenge, but also a fundamentally social issue.

Companies that not only made decisions geared towards boosting sustainability, but adopted it as the guiding principle of their corporate strategy and sought to apply it across the board, have thoroughly altered their way of working. Their green shift has impacted on every level of their business and every job.

But some people are losing their jobs, too.

For example, creating new jobs north of the Alps in the solar power industry will be no consolation to the farm labourer in southern Spain who has lost his job as a result of climate change.

For this reason, no 'green deal' can relieve us of our responsibility to offer new job prospects and opportunities to such workers.

If we are to avoid letting workers down, we need conversion projects, and of course the necessary funding.

We also need a sustainable industrial and regional policy which the unions and affected parties can help to shape. That is - and will remain - one of our main demands.



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Incidentally, The Agenda 21 Treaty adopted in Rio as long ago as 1992, advocated strengthening unions' involvement in protecting the environment. It even dedicates a separate chapter to the role played by unions.

Chapter 29 calls for:

- the active participation of workers and their trade unions in decisions on the design, implementation and evaluation of national and international policies on the environment, including at company level;
- the establishment of collaborative mechanisms to deal with safety, health, the environment and workers' active participation in the shaping of environmental standards.

The Rio Treaty already clearly underscored the fact that our environment also includes our working environment.

Many debates tend to overlook this fact.

Consequently, we unions have a special duty to make sure it features more prominently in any discussions.

Because it's totally unacceptable for EU farmers, for example, to have to worry about cross-compliance that is mandatory for meeting environmental, but not social, standards.

We expect the conference to agree on internationally binding targets that can subsequently actually be attained. This will require common international structures that register and monitor the respective national action plans. So far no such structures have been set up.

Another key question is how any measures will be funded.

Without private investors the necessary steps cannot be taken.

There already is a strong and financially powerful environmental lobby that is vocally championing environmental protection and is responsible for creating many new jobs.

In the long term these investors need reliable political framework conditions and above all clearly binding targets for lowering emissions.

Whether we like it or not, the environment's best chance of survival will be if environmentally-minded behaviour pays off in economic terms.

This is what we expect the EU leadership to bring about.

We also have an ally whose contribution towards promoting sustainable development all too often goes under acknowledged: the consumer.

Today's consumers expect products to be manufactured under sustainable conditions. But then consumers ought to be able to consult a sustainability label, to help them make environmentally enlightened purchasing decisions. There's no shortage of organic and environmentally friendly food labels. What's missing is a universally recognised sustainability label that also takes account of social criteria.

Surely it's unacceptable for the EU to demand mandatory compliance with environmental standards when manufacturing biofuels, but not impose a ban on child labour on palm oil plantations in Indonesia?



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All this is reminiscent of some highly controversial debates we unions conducted with environmental organisations many years ago. But I think that since then we have come to understand that the social and environmental aspects of an issue are two sides of the same coin.

Today, we are united by the concept of sustainability that unites us today, paving the way for an entirely new form of cooperation.

I'm very grateful to the ETUC for fostering such cooperation, which in future we should draw on even more than we have done in the past, with a view to achieving sustainable development.

Harald WIEDENHOFER
EFFAT General Secretary