



GEORGE MAVRIKOS,
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

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“TRADE UNIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE”

Dear comrades of NUMSA

Dear guests,

It is a great honor and joy for WFTU being here today with our comrades from South Africa and representatives of the international trade union scene. Our joy is even greater because we participate in an initiative of NUMSA which is a historic, militant, class-oriented organization. We salute the struggles of NUMSA which are important not only for the workers of the sector in your country but also from the wider area. NUMSA is one of the three organizations members of WFTU in South Africa. This year, WFTU celebrated 66 years of class struggle for the interests of the working class worldwide. Another historic event that took place in Athens, Greece this year was **the 16th World Trade Union Congress in which more than 828 trade unionists from 101 countries of the world participated.**

THE CONDITION NOWADAYS

Dear comrades,

Over the last fifty years the environment is receiving increasing pressure from the way the productive forces “develop” in the conditions of the imperialist new order. Moreover, the deep crisis of the capitalist system in economical, social, cultural and environmental level worsens even more the situation today.

The consequences are more and more intense for the working class, the farmers, the poor and middle strata of the city – in other words- the majority of the planet’s inhabitants whether they belong in the developed or the developing countries. On the one hand the number of workers who participate in the wealth-producing procedure is increasing. On the other hand, the number of exploiters who accumulate in their hands the means of production and appropriate the produced wealth is decreasing, which as they procure to increase their wealth just for themselves.

The hunt for super-profits by the transnational monopolies causes severe disasters to the planet, condemns the one third of the planet to starve and live in miserable conditions. Lack of protection against natural disasters, global warming, reduction of the productive ozone shield, depletion of natural resources, destruction of forests, desertification, genetically modified organisms, nuclear and toxic waste, dangerous nutritional dependence on transnational monopolies, air pollution, lack of access to clear water.



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THE LABOUR ENVIRONMENT

The labour environment continues to be a cause of diseases and death for a big number of working people every year. According to the ILO data, more than 1 million working people every year lose their lives because of the unacceptable working conditions. According to the same source, more than 160 million of working people suffer every year from occupational diseases. The generalities for a “decent work” do not stop deaths. Decent work in general and as loosely as it is used doesn’t mean anything. For WFTU, decent work is the stable and full-time work, the good salary, the good pension, the social insurance, the health and safety measures in the workplaces, the strict punishment of the employers.

THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

The scientists are sounding the alarm for the rise of temperature that will cause the ice melt at both poles, the sinking of coastal cities and natural disasters. The pollution trade increases severely the threats for the Third World.

FOREST DESTRUCTION

According to official data, every year, about 200 million acres of tropical forests are being destroyed. It is estimated that until 2025 large tropical forests in Central and South America and in Asia will be completely destroyed.

LACK OF WATER

It is common knowledge that millions of people all over the world, amongst them 400 million children, are struggling for their lives without access to clean drinking water. The commercialization of water generates misery and deaths.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED PRODUCTS

The monopolies and the multinationals from USA and Europe are accelerating and widening the growing and the trading of genetically modified products despite the announcements of scientists for the dangers that are lurking for the lives of the animal’s and plant’s environment.

BIODIVERSITY

According to announcements launched during the International Conference of the **International Union of Environment** more than 7.000 species of fauna and 8.000 species of flora have been extinct.



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MILITARY IMPERIALIST INVASIONS

A worse result of the imperialist order is the military imperialist invasions and the civil conflicts whose impact will burden the lives and the health condition of many future generations.

During their invasion in Iraq in 1991, in the Gulf War, the USA used 300 tones of depleted uranium missiles and in the 2003 second imperialist invasion in the country the use of depleted uranium reached 1.000 tones.

The depleted uranium is the most severe environmental problem that the NATO bombing inherited at Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia in 1999.

Measurements taken by international foundations, like the UN and other organizations found that the habitants had been exposed to an amount dangerous for causing cancer and leukemia. The UN scientists named this phenomenon “the Balkan Syndrome”.

The invasion in Afghanistan in 2001 left the country deserted and the ecosystem destroyed, the environment polluted and the production of opium had ejected in such levels of production that have reached the yearly production of 8.300 in 2007 while the production before the invasion was 180 tones.

In Libya, the NATO bombing with hundreds of tomahawk missile were a disaster not only in human lives but also for the ecosystem of the country and the Mediterranean Sea and resulted in the creation of a “toxic dust” that caused damages in the human organism, carcinogenesis and disorders of the nervous system. But also for the rest of Africa the list of provoked civil wars is endless: Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Chad with corresponding impact in the people’s lives.

The murderous Israeli air raids against Palestine and Lebanon with the pollution of the water resources and the destruction of the fauna and flora, and in the same time, the embargo of the USA and EU against Cuba continuing now for 51 years, bring us to the following question: What does the environment mean for the capital and its political representatives?

It is nothing more than a source of profiting and plundering of the planet’s natural resources.

WHO IS TO BLAME? WHICH ARE THE CAUSES?

It is not the fault of the human being, in general, neither his labour and his knowledge nor his scientific and technological achievements who is to blame for the greenhouse effect and the



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depleting ozone holes. The human being in general is not to blame, for the immense disaster of the natural environment, the continuous downgrading of the urban environment, the intensifying expansion of the slums, and the intensifying impact of the weather phenomena in burden of the poor popular strata, neither for the lack of clean water and healthy food nor for the destruction of cultural monuments and the diseases that kill dozens of millions of people every year.

In the contrary, **it is the nature of the capitalist system that is to blame, since it generates, reproduces and worsens those problems, with the continuous chase for bigger profit and the ensuring of the most powerful geostrategic position that will provide it.** This is the framework of the arguments between the imperialist centers in the relevant international Conferences, such as the one of Copenhagen. Their arguments reflect **the intensification of their contradictions** for the control of the markets, which is expressed in the determinations of the goals as well, the mechanisms of control and the distribution of the funding for the confrontation of the climate change.

The capitalist system, which is in decay, is also the background for the military imperialist invasions that destroy not only the environment but the international cultural heritage and thousands of lives as well. It is the background also for the huge ecological disasters with technological nature, like the one at the **Gulf of Mexico by the monopoly of BP, the recent nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan, such as the poor houses in Turkey that were demolished by the earthquake or the poor houses that were drowned by the floods in Asia and Central America.** This is why the protection of the environment cannot be confronted independently from the class-based orientation of the development path followed by each society.

The working class, the popular strata realize this more, year after year, since they gain their own experience for the role these disorienting slogans about the “joint responsibility of all” and for “the people over profit” play. The same as the “voluntary” but highly paid activity of the accredited international and national “Non Governmental Organizations”.

PROPOSITIONS

The working people cannot be trapped in the slogans for “green economy” which actually means “green business” and new fields of profitability for the monopolies.

Our propositions are:



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- Immediate measures to be taken for the health and security in the work places.
- The obligation of the developed countries for a generous financial aid towards the developing countries and the transfer of useful technology related to the climate change.
- The protection of the traditional agricultural production of the indigenous peoples and rural communities and the total respect over their rights.
- The proposition to the UN for the adoption of the “Declaration of the Rights of the Mother Earth” which would include our own approaches as well (mainly for the causes of the climate change), policy terms and conditions for its confrontation.
- The reexamining of the causes of the climate change to reconfirm that they are related (we say originated) to the capitalist system and the maximizing of its profit, the commercialization of the nature and the exploitation of man-by-man.
- The opposition against the production and the use of genetically modified organisms, biofuels and the abuse of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers etc.
- The rejection of the perception of “adapting to the climate change” which means a resignation towards the consequences that were caused by the greenhouse gas emissions of the developed countries.
- Policies and measures for the energy saving.
- Substantial reduction of the energy losses and the waste.
- Improvement of the energy efficiency of thermal plants.
- Improvement of the quality of the available fossil fuels.
- Designed and rational development of the renewable energy sources with respect to the environment which has nothing to do with the delivering of the energy-producing fields to the private sector.
- Growing of the forests and other acres of green, protection of the seas, the lakes and the rivers.
- Measures for the protection against the earthquakes and the floods



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THE SOLUTION - THE WAY OUT

Dear comrades,

We believe that imperialism, the capital, the monopolies and the governments that serve them do not play without an opponent. They have to deal with the working class, the poor and middle-class peasants, the self-employed, the petty business owners, the labour intelligencia in the developed and developing countries, the vital interests of whom are identical with the need for a harmonic symbiosis between man and nature.

We are all, people of labour and toil; we are the ones who produce the wealth of the world, who realize daily that not only our working place but the planet itself is closely combined with our lives and with the lives of our children and our descendants. It is the place we work in, where we create, we rest, we dream, from where draw power for more achievements.

In this world, the working class, especially the forces of WFTU, we consider as an important tool in our hands, the great historic conquest of our last century, the socialist way of production so that the land, the forests, the coasts, the mineral wealth, the ports, the airports can become social ownership.

The centralized planning of the economy -having in its center the total welfare of the working people-, the social ownership of the means of production, the planning of the use of land which belongs to the whole society, the promotion of research and the selection of the best technology according to the long-term and constant combined satisfaction of the people's needs, these are the only stable bases for a harmonic symbiosis of man and nature, for their common progress and development.

And all of those combined with the elimination of wars, the cultural development, the cultivation of solidarity amongst the people of the planet, highlight from the prospect of the protection of the environment and the saving of our planet, the Mother Earth, not only the timeliness but also the historic necessity for another path of development, for socialism.

This is the target for which we call all the working people in common action, in order to build a better world, a fair world, a world for us and our children without the barbarity of the capitalist system.