

## **DECLARATION OF THE 3rd REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND WORK**

The 3rd Conference on Energy, Environment and Work, convened by the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA-CSA) in San José Costa Rica, from October 8 to 11, 2018, has brought together representatives from 15 countries from around the continent, 20 trade union centers affiliated to TUCA and 4 which are fraternal, 7 continental social movements, 4 civil society organizations and 5 universities.

This declaration summarizes points of debate and agreements reached from the dialogue between the trade union movement and other representatives as part of the social alliances strategy that we share with participating movements and which is materialized in the making of the Continental Day for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism.

The working class of the Americas is going through a political juncture of grave risks and threats to peace, liberties, social rights and democracy.

The neoliberal agenda is making a comeback in countries where we had managed to deter it. Unlike in the 1990s, when neoliberalism managed to sell itself electorally, today it comes as a package of fascist and authoritarian proposals, combined with hate speech that is misogynistic, racist, xenophobic, homophobic, openly anti-union and that attacks social movements. Even the peace process in Colombia between the state and different insurgencies, key to detente throughout the region, is now threatened by the new Duque administration.

This situation comes after a cycle of social progress in several Latin American countries, eventually thrown into question by the violent fluctuations of the 2008 crisis and whose lasting effects continue to be felt globally.

Reactionary political and social forces aim to fracture grassroots movements, claiming that societal problems are caused by the proposals of union leaders, migrants, LGBTQ people, feminists, people of color, the youth, farmers, indigenous communities and environmentalists. There is a notable upsurge in repression and the criminalization of social struggle. Elite interests manipulate the fears of people in periods of unemployment, instability, and/or recession, with the creation and propagation of fake news playing a key role to this end within both social media platforms and, importantly, established news corporations.

Xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia and racism are discourses of intolerance which, far from being constrained to politically marginal sectors of society, currently occupy center stage.

Additionally, there is a new wave of individualist ideology aiming to set the stage for government attacks on labor organizations and grassroots movements.

Moreover, state policies agreed upon in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are clearly insufficient given the scale of the challenge posed by the climate crisis. We haven't been able to set in motion a true ecological transition. Meanwhile, a global structure works efficiently to guarantee the impunity of transnational corporations whose drive for profit is prioritized over the entire global working class and the environment. We will continue to pressure within and beyond the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to stop climate change and advance in social justice. This moment requires resistance to the reactionary and conservative wave, affirmation of the victories our people have achieved, and the formation and consolidation of broad social and political alliances so that we may collectively resist and win.

The trade unionism that we need for this period is one dedicated not to lobbying, but to mobilizing and organizing workers.

### **1. Work is at the Heart of Alternative Politics.**

Work continues to be central to the life of our societies. However, it is under attack from both political forces affiliated to employers' organizations and from sociological interpretations that attempt to convince us that workers are no longer necessary and that we must consequently accept the erosion of past victories regarding social, labor and union rights.

The reactionary forces have launched a renewed individualistic offensive full of hatred towards "others and others" including the poor and marginalized who they fault for the deterioration of living and working conditions, a product of neoliberal policies.

For the trade union movement the starting point of a transition from a high carbon economy, based on agribusiness and mining-energy extractivism to another socially and environmentally sustainable, is to ensure that it results in the consolidation and expansion of decent work.

Recovering the vision of the centrality of work implies recognizing the work necessary for the production of living: that which is carried out in the home and in the community, primarily by women, outside the commercial realm and which is not recognized for its contributions to economic and social development. Capital's appropriation of its fruits is the other side of the ongoing misogynistic attack on women's rights. The patriarchy is, beyond simply a cultural phenomenon, a system of domination that generates income for the exploitation of unpaid labor.

### **2. Democratization of Energy;**

We must conceive of energy as a fundamental right for a country's entire population and, as such, it must be defended as a public service. This right is essential if people are to exercise their fundamental human and social rights, their integration into social life, and uphold their dignity.

The first demand of the working class is to end energy poverty. That is, ensure that everyone have access to the energy required to maintain basic standards of family life and mobility. Our income mustn't be corroded by the expenses incurred to cover said basic needs.

We affirm the need to democratize energy, because we understand that far from being just a debate between state planners, sector technicians and managers of large companies, it has to be society, through democratic and transparent mechanisms of popular participation, who define what energy we want to develop, how, for what purposes and for whom, and in doing so question, among other things, the excessive consumption patterns of the elites. It is not enough to discuss changes in the energy mix, we must debate the energy policy in relation to our desired vision for national and regional development.

Given this vision, the labor movement together with grassroots organizations has an affirmative agenda:

- Privatization of the sector, given that the logic of private profit is opposed to the logic of satisfying the needs of peoples and nations;
- Recovery of sovereignty over our resources and common goods, breaking commitments that require accepting systems of impunity for large transnational companies that operate in the energy sector or that use it intensively in our countries and territories while taking advantage of free trade agreements and investment protections;
- Discussion regarding the role and application of technology within a democratically-decided national project. We must not accept technological determinisms imposed and manipulated by corporate interests nor that, under the pretext of transition, reinforce dependence on technological development centers in the Global North;

We must increasingly move towards the de-commodification and de-fossilization of our energy matrix, from a vision of transition based on democratic, social, and environmental justice.

### **3. Energy as a Common Good;**

To affirm energy as a common good is to question the privatization of the energy sector, itself a necessary step in reversing the commodification of energy and its recognition as a right.

It is about repositioning democratic mechanisms of participation in society, claiming the role of the State in the ownership, control and reorientation of the generation and use of energy from its public nature. The extraordinary income that the sector can generate, due to the characteristics of several energy sources, must have a socially-defined application according to a sovereign vision based on the guarantee of the rights of the

working class. The provision of energy as a basic right necessarily involves a profound revision of the way society views the sector. There is a need for a new pedagogy that promotes our cultural, educational and organizational emancipation.

In this understanding, we can also promote a deconcentration and decentralization of the sector, promoting local initiatives, cooperatives, community, etc. taking advantage of the possibilities of available technological alternatives and others that can be developed from a popular perspective. We advocate for the development of a public sector that goes beyond state ownership and centralization, contributing to local development and, additionally, moving towards regional integration projects.

#### **4. Just Transition**

The ecological and social transition in energy matters must recognize that it comes from a complex scenario of many heterogeneities. Just as no two countries are the same, likewise no two regions within a given country are the same. And while, similarly, no two social sectors are the same, we must advance in building minimum agreements.

It is necessary to position the discussion of Just Transition within the realm of national, subnational and local scales, in dialogue between the countryside and the city. In other words, there is no single, all-encompassing model or way forward in the transitions we advocate.

We must therefore discuss and define the general parameters. For the trade union movement, the starting point is that the transition should promote decent work and ensure labor and social rights with the option of effective social dialogue.

It is essential that it be guided also by democratic criteria of citizen participation, aiming for peace in the regions, the reduction of extractivism, the democratization of access to land and the promotion of agrarian reform, and the overcoming a social structure based on patriarchy.

A Just Transition can not be oriented towards a new commodification of nature and energy alternatives.

Nor should it be seen as part of a debate dominated by technical specialists, but must rather incorporate the vision of our socio-political trade unionism and other social sectors, which aims at the adaptation of technological alternatives with the desire to build societies of inclusion of all and all

#### **5. The Continental Conference for Democracy and against Neoliberalism**

The Continental Conference for Democracy and against Neoliberalism is the platform where this vindication of the central role of the working class in its multiple facets must be combined with the struggle to end impunity and the capture of States and territories, on the part of the large corporations, in defense of the rights and promotion of the peasant economy and food sovereignty, the feminist economy and environmental and

social justice.

The union struggle agenda is inseparable from social alliances with all movements that resist neoliberalism and the advance of fascism in the region. From these alliances we call to mobilize permanently against neoliberalism, fascism and in defense of democracy. We will meet at the November 2018 demonstrations against the G20 and the IMF in Buenos Aires and throughout the continent.

We will remain mobilized in places of work, schools, universities, squares, communities, territories, streets, etc.

***Unity and social alliances in defense of Our America! The struggle continues!***