



Partnership for Tackling Climate Change

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We hear again and again that we must choose between having a stable climate and having a strong global economy. This is a false choice.

The global economy cannot prosper unless we secure a stable climate and sustainable sources of energy. In fact, global warming means global depression, food and water shortages and drowned cities.

I have stood in New Orleans and seen that future - a future in which the poorest, the most vulnerable, the working poor suffer the most. How can we turn away from a future of global crisis and suffering for the worst off among us? Can we learn from these crises to build new opportunities or will we just resume business-as-usual and wait for the next disaster?

Clearly, it is time to correct the path and change the way we think about a just and sustainable economy that works for all.

In the world of work, a number of possibilities and opportunities are at hand. A recently published study shows that in the alone, the ,environmental industry created more than 5.3 million jobs - 10 times more than in the US pharmaceutical industry.

In Europe, I am told, a 20 percent increase in energy efficiency would create about a million jobs. The renewable energy programs in Germany and Spain are just 10 years old but have already created hundreds of thousands of jobs. By the year 2020, Germany will have more jobs in the field of environmental technologies than in its entire automotive industry. Germany is a world leader in solar technology: It is not a sunny country, but for innovation - and manufacturing capability, Germany has few rivals.

For emerging and developing countries, the opportunities for change are just as tremendous. These are lessons for us all: the low carbon economy is not just about wind or solar or reducing greenhouse gases, but about changing existing workplaces and ensuring decent work at the same time.

As unions, we are convinced that today's workplaces must be transformed. The `greener' economy we need will not emerge through the production of new goods or energy sources alone, but from a transformation of the production chain itself using workers' commitment, creativity and skills. And on top of the jobs that could be created to protect

the environment, more jobs will be created in supplying and in downstream industries. Traditional jobs must be improved to allow workers to participate in the transformation of the world of work - in its technology, organization and final products.

The recently published OECD Environmental Outlook to 2030 expresses the organization's dismay at current policies regarding climate change, water quality and biodiversity.

Current policies are clearly insufficient to protect our children's future.

One can dispute the numbers, but the central message is clear: current growth patterns are unsustainable and there is an urgent need for a change of course to a lower carbon path.

In reforming our policies, the following points are essential:

First, there will be no such thing as environmentally friendly production if workers' rights are not respected and workers are not trained continuously for the jobs of the future. Workers are on the front line when it comes to the consequences of a deteriorating environment. Its effects are felt on the number and quality of our jobs, our safety and our families' health. Workers are prepared to act as indispensable guardians of the workplace and the planet, if we are given the right to do so.

Second, a massive transformation in our production methods will not be possible unless we take into account those who stand to lose their livelihoods as a consequence of changes in energy and production systems. Without a clear plan for an equitable and fair transition towards a low carbon economy, we will not be able to muster the global consensus necessary to act.

And third, we cannot build a climate-friendly economy without ambitious public policies to supplement the transformation of the world of work and improve energy and resource efficiency, while ensuring that jobs, income and wealth are more equitably distributed within and among countries.

"Green jobs" are the key to achieving a low carbon economy. But we must go further and build a more just and sustainable development policy in which jobs are not only a source of wealth and social progress - but also yield a more sustainable environment for future generations.

Scientists tell us we have very little time. Let us begin now.