

**Speech given by Bernadette Ségol, ETUC General Secretary
LO-N Congress
3 May 2013, Oslo**

[Check against delivery]

President, Dear Roar,
Dear Prime Minister
Friends,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to your congress.
I am bringing you the warm and friendly wishes of all trade unions within the European Trade Union Confederation.

I find it particularly nice, and, to tell you the truth, quite relaxing, to be able to speak to a Trade Union congress, where membership is growing, unemployment at 3 pc, labour market participation at 70 pc, women participation in the labour market at 67pc, public debt at 50pc and where we hear of public surplus instead of deficit.

Recently I have been more likely to speak to congresses where the mood and the figures were totally different. I am convinced that trade unionists cannot be indifferent to the fate of people. This is one of the meaning of the word: "solidarity". I ask you to imagine the explosive atmosphere in Greece, Spain, Portugal, and even in Ireland. Not only imagine, but feel it, feel the pain and despair of ordinary people who see no future. Remember, we call each other brothers and sisters.

There are most certainly many reasons for your success, oil and gas, but the first one is your capacity to organise, your capacity to negotiate,

You can be proud of you success;

Fantastic, congratulations. Please, keep it up.

Keep it up, yes; but be aware that no country is an island; we are all interdependent; EU is a very important trading partner for Norway and the bi-lateral agreement you have with the EU means that there is no protecting wall between us. Protectionism is not a solution.

LO is an active member of the ETUC, and, as such actively shaping our policy. It is very important that you should be there.

ETUC policy must be adapted to all European trade unions, from the South or from the North, from the East or the West.

European Trade Union Unity, is our strength. LO Norway knows that and has been ready to find the right European trade union solutions. Thank you for your cooperative and constructive spirit within the ETUC.

So, what are the cornerstones of our policy, at a time of tremendous difficulties, social unrest, social destabilisation in some countries.

First: ETUC is fighting to get the social dimension back on the agenda. ETUC has supported European integration, as an historical project enabling European countries to have a strong position on the world stage but above all because this project was something more than a free trade zone. It was and must remain a social project meant to offer full employment and social progress.

Most politicians are forgetting this objective. They have put in place policies, which we call "austerity" policies which attack the model we are defending; these policies have attacked labour rights, social dialogue, they have unilaterally forced structural reforms.

One year ago we proposed a social compact for Europe, which you supported. This year, in June the Commission will issue a roadmap, including a roadmap on the social dimension of the EMU. ETUC has unanimously adopted a declaration during its last EC. And we want to push this proposal. I'll meet as many Heads of States or Government as possible in the near future and tell them how important it is to bring the attention back to social dimension.

Yesterday I was invited to speak to the College of commissioners and my message to them was very clear: change policy, give priority to sustainable growth and quality employment. Workers and citizens are losing patience. This is a dangerous path leading to populism and extremism.

I come to the second cornerstone of our demands; indeed ETUC is fighting for sustainable growth and quality jobs.

Policies implemented today are not policies for sustainable growth and quality jobs; I underline "sustainable" and "quality" although I will not have time to develop this. They are policies single-mindedly addressing structural reforms, pressing to weaken industrial relations and wage formation systems, ignoring the value of solid social dialogue.

ETUC is not against change, but change must be negotiated and must be fair on workers.

The Troika policies have failed; these policies are unsustainable because they increase inequalities, poverty, and unemployment.

For growth, we need an investment plan. We need money for that. That money can be found. The money was found, one trillion, to rescue the banks. This multiplied public debts sometimes by 3 on the back of the people. Why is it not possible to mobilise 1pc of EU GDP that is some 140 billion for jobs? How about mobilising private funding? Currently we know that 1 trillion euros is escaping taxation every year. Things must be done to stop the scandal of tax avoidance, tax fraud, and tax evasion. A number of proposals are on the table of the Council. But taxation is a matter to be agreed with

unanimity and Heads of States and Government are dragging their feet. We hope that recent developments in Cyprus, but also scandals in France and Germany should be a strong enough alarm bell to unlock the situation.

We welcome the process towards an FTT, a long standing ETUC demand. Even if this tax cannot cover the necessary amount for investment, it could contribute to it; in any case it is a sign that capital must pay its share.

Third with this social roadmap we want to promote dialogue and negotiation; I mean we want to do this at European level, of course, but we want to do it first at national level. European social dialogue is superficial if it is not based on strong national dialogue.

In many European countries industrial relations have been attacked and the potential to find the right solutions and the right protection through collective bargaining has been undermined. Greece and Spain have appealed to the ILO. And it is clear that collective bargaining rights and the freedom to bargain collectively has not been respected. The right to bargain collectively is a fundamental social right. You in LO, we in the ETUC we won't let this go.

Norwegian trade unions know that collective bargaining and strong industrial relation are the main recipe for success; this is why LO is firmly supporting our fight.

Fourth, our social roadmap demands an active fight against social dumping and minimum standards; I am aware social dumping is a problem in Norway despite the extension of the validity of collective agreements through legislation. Social and wage dumping are against social justice, because workers must be treated equally; whatever their origin. Equal pay for equal work is a basic value for us.

In Norway you are securing decent wages through collective bargaining. This is the best solution. In many countries unions are fighting to reach the same result and must do it through legal minimum wages. I thank you for supporting their fight.

ETUC is working very hard to improve the current legislation on implementing the posting of workers directive. But I must tell you that we have a lot of resistance in Parliament. A lot of work must still be done.

Friends I would like to thank Roar for his good work for Norwegian workers, his dedication for LO, and also for your support to the ETUC and to me personally. I appreciated your constructive participation in our executive committees. It is very important. I am sure that your new leading team will continue along the same line.

Thank you friends for keeping up your great social model.
Thank you for your help,
Thank you for your solidarity.
I wish you a very successful congress.