

28 February 2008

Spring Summit 2008 / ETUC, EEB and Social Platform  
open letter to head of state and of government on social and sustainable  
development and the energy/climate package

*The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and the Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform) have joined forces since 2001 to campaign for a social and sustainable development of Europe. Every year, at the occasion of the Spring Summit, the three organisations issue common recommendations to EU leaders on how to maintain a balanced approach between economic, environmental and social objectives. This year their contribution focuses on the social and environmental dimension of the energy/climate package.*

ETUC, EEB and Social Platform welcome the energy/climate package put forward by the Commission to the 2008 Spring Council. We believe that this is a good starting point to enhance the global environmental leadership of the Commission and EU Member States. However in relation to this initiative we would like to draw the attention of EU leaders to the following issues:

Social and sustainable development as overarching EU priorities

Fighting climate change and energy security are clearly political priorities for Europe. They should be part of a coherent approach to achieve Europe's long term goals as laid down in the treaties, including the social objectives.

ETUC, EEB and Social Platform call upon the European Council to use the key objectives<sup>1</sup> of the EU strategy for sustainable development, as agreed by the European Council of June 2006, and its policy guiding principles<sup>2</sup> as overarching priorities for all EU initiatives including the climate and energy package.

The 20% target is insufficient

ETUC, EEB and Social Platform consider that the proposed 20% autonomous target for EU emissions reduction is insufficient. The 4<sup>th</sup> report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes that for industrialised countries emissions reductions between 25% and 40% by 2020 are necessary to prevent dramatic global warming.

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<sup>1</sup> The key objectives as set up in the EU sustainable development strategy (2006) are environmental protection, social equity and cohesion, economic prosperity and meeting our international responsibilities

<sup>2</sup> The policy guiding principles are promotion and protection of fundamental rights, solidarity within and between generation, open and democratic society, involvement of citizens, involvement of businesses and social partners, policy coherence and governance, use best available knowledge, precautionary principle and make polluters pay.

Responding decisively to refusal of other industrialized countries to join in

ETUC, EEB and Social Platform call upon the European Council to combine an ambitious climate policy with measures that protect the EU based industry from unfair competition based on the refusal from other industrialised states to take similar climate measures. In this regard, we support the adoption of border tax adjustments, while insisting that revenues should be used to promote sustainable development in developing countries.

Energy efficiency and energy savings are the absolute priorities

ETUC, EEB and Social Platform insist that core of the EU Strategy for Energy and Climate should be energy efficiency and energy savings. This requires a combination of standard setting for products, the right price signals through taxation and levies, training programmes for new jobs and ambitious public and private investment strategies in particular in the housing and transport sector<sup>3</sup>. The EU has a non-binding strategy to increase energy efficiency with 20% by 2020 (leading to absolute reductions of energy use of some 1% per year), but the recent Lisbon report by the Commission shows that Member States are not into that speed.

ETUC, EEB and the Social Platform call upon the Spring European Council to make this energy efficiency target binding, and insist on the full and early implementation of the Action Plan that was proposed by the Commission in October 2006.

Energy as a public good and a basic necessity

EEB, ETUC and Social Platform call for measures to prevent negative social impacts of rising energy prices. A universal and affordable access to basic energy supply needs to be secured to all people living in Europe. However here again the objective should be to reduce energy needs by efficiency improvements and affordable low-energy alternatives. In addition, the availability and development of social data needs to be improved across the EU to measure better the accessibility of energy services for people on low incomes.

ETUC, EEB and the Social Platform call on public authorities to design energy policies that include social cohesion/inclusion and environmental objectives. We believe that public transport and investment in green social housing must play a key role in decreasing energy consumption and at the same time promote people's well being and reinforce local communities.

Creating quality jobs

EEB, ETUC and Social Platform see great opportunities for meaningful job-creation in well designed climate/energy policies. Energy efficiency alone can create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the construction/renovation sectors. Pro-active ecological modernisation policies, such as the German Alliance for labour and environment launched in 2003, can make the EU world leader in renewable energy technologies and energy efficient products (including in the car industry). Shortage of skilled workforce is currently hampering the scaling up of energy efficiency EU-wide.

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<sup>3</sup> See manifesto adopted by the ETUC, EEB and the Social Platform on investing in sustainable development ([http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/Manifesto\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Investment.pdf](http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/Manifesto_for_Sustainable_Investment.pdf)).

EEB, ETUC and Social Platform call upon the Spring European Council to agree on coordinated national actions for creating quality jobs and training programmes to respond to new market opportunities in the field of energy efficiency.

A European finance plan for sustainable growth initiative

Massive public and private investments will be required in a short period of time to renew the EU-capital stock in order to address the challenge of climate change. A significant part of these investments, such as railway infrastructure, public transport, thermal renovation of buildings or early replacement of fossil fuel based power plants by renewable energy production, can not be financed by financial markets alone as they have long payback periods. We know that these investments could temporarily increase public deficit but it will also stimulate a sustainable growth, contribute to respond to environmental challenges, create quality jobs and defend low and middle income purchasing power and standards of living.

ETUC, EEB and Social Platform call on the European Council to adopt a European finance plan for sustainable growth initiative. This plan should include:

- The adoption by EU governments of the related Commission's proposals to facilitate environmentally sound investments;
- The allocation of substantial parts of the revenues generated by the auctioning of emission rights to support jobs creation and prevent fuel poverty;
- An initiative by the European Investment bank (EIB) to mobilise capital - up to 1% of European GDP - to lend to EU governments investing in sustainable priorities (i.e. renewable energy production, energy efficiency including combined heat-power production and social energy saving programmes).

Governance and involvement of civil society

Our coalition - which brings together trade unions and social and environmental NGOs – shows that civil society can be united and mobilised in responding to new challenges. Global warming, environmental degradation and raise in social inequalities are of direct concerns for many active citizens engage in the voluntary sector or/and in the trade union movements. Their energy, ideas and expertise need to be recognised and used by decision makers. ETUC, EEB and Social Platform call for an increased involvement of all stakeholders through a more structured civil and social dialogue with the public authorities on the design and implementation of the climate policies (both at national and European level).

We hope we can count on your support on these points.  
Yours,



John Monks  
General Secretary, ETUC



Fintan Farrell  
President, Social Platform



John Hontelez  
Secretary General, EEB