

2022 Lisbon Declaration on Climate Jobs and Just Transition

The climate is changing, and these changes can already be felt all over the world, both in the form of extreme weather events and climate catastrophes, as in the form of increase in average temperatures and changes in local climates. As a consequence, the livelihoods, identities, and cultures of people are threatened and are already been destroyed. The regions and communities with the least historical responsibility for GHG emissions are the ones affected the most and the ones less listened to.

In order to cut emissions to the extent and in the timeframe that climate science tell us to be necessary, we need to create a lot of new jobs in renewable energies, public transportation systems, in making buildings more efficient, in agriculture that respects the ecological cycles and ecosystems, in forest protection, in waste management, in professional training and re-qualification, while shutting down the polluting sectors.

The opportunity that lies in this challenge is the one of creating new emission cutting jobs that are dignified, with fair wages, and respecting environmental, health, hygiene and safety rules - Climate Jobs. These have to be public jobs created in the optic of public service. Massive amounts of funding have to be mobilized, carrying out actions without the need to maximize profits, but rather guaranteeing direct and immediate jobs to workers that will lose their old jobs due to the transition.

Governments, international institutions and the "invisible hand of the market" have failed in their responses to the climate crisis. Nevertheless, we know that historically the biggest developments in democracy, social rights, and access to public services, such as healthcare and education, have been gained due to the organized struggles of the working class. This was so because the workers, if organized and united through their different oppressions of class, race, gender expression and sexuality, have massive power.

Similarly, stopping climate change can't be done without a massive popular movement. Indigenous people have been fighting against the destruction brought upon by multinational corporations that have been ensuring climate and ecological catastrophe. Recently we have seen the strengthening and internationalization of a climate movement that has been demanding climate justice all around the world. This movement is seeking to unite workers everywhere to ensure a just transition.

Such a transition will have to also involve sectors of work which capital considers non-productive. Any kind of organizing for Climate Jobs campaigns will have to involve, organize, and mobilize workers doing care work, which are mainly women and racialized persons. Reproductive labour is very often made invisible and left out of the labour movement, even though these workers - that ensure the pillars of the capitalist system - are the most marginalized and thus the most fragilized of the working class. This transition has to change the path of our economy from a profit-extracting march of death to an economy with life at its centre, building a new system that cares for both people and planet, that values indigenous and peasant knowledge, and respects nature and its cycles.

Workers have been left out of the discussions on how to carry this transformation, and so what has happened, to a big extent, happened without considering their interests, rights and demands, while at the same time has not resulted in an actual decrease in GHG emissions or in an improvement of local ecological conditions. On the contrary, any plan that aims to solve the climate crisis should be dictated not by companies needs but by the needs of the workers and life on Earth. A Just Transition plan needs to specially include workers and communities affected by the climate crisis and/or by the transition, so it can result in the improvement of living conditions everywhere. It should never result in the increase of exploitation and of extractivism, while on the contrary, it should be built upon international solidarity, with the goals of peace and democracy at its core.

The points of convergence between the workers and the climate justice movements are immense. As so, we call for environmental and climate justice organizations, workers' movements and unions, as well as other civil society groups, to come together to create and raise support for Climate Jobs campaigns. An increase in the number of international campaigns would shift globally the conversation about Just Transition, rescuing it from the hands of profit, and would mobilize workers and the climate justice movement everywhere, to create a future.