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**Submission of TUAC to the UNEP Industry Sector Reports:
Tourism**

CAVEAT

The following report is based on information obtainable by the author during the course of research and writing. Attempts have been made to obtain input from appropriate labour groups. However, it is important to note that there may be relevant policy documents and points of view not represented here. This document is subject to change as additional input may be forthcoming. Please ensure that you are reading the most recent version. Therefore this report should be considered an introduction to trade union thinking on these issues rather than a final or complete position.

INTRODUCTION

The Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) along with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) welcome this opportunity to provide our response to the Industry Sector Reports being prepared by international industry associations under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP); Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics.

When seeking information on the sustainability of any industry, it is important to remember that the input from industry management and industry associations is only one-half of the story - the owners' part. Workers, through the unions which represent them, are able to complete the picture.

Business hopes to ensure that its positive contributions to sustainability are appropriately recognized. Trade unions, as part of both "industry" and civil society, acknowledge that in many cases, industries and sectors have made important progress in the areas of technology development and technology transfer, environmental management systems and tools, and voluntary initiatives.

However, there are many unfulfilled past promises, and complex future challenges for industry. These are neither uniform between industry sectors, between nations, nor even within single nations and industry sectors.

LABOUR'S VIEW OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The simplest definition of sustainable development states that we must meet the "needs" of today's generation without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This simple definition becomes more complex upon examination of the word "needs". "Needs" does not just mean environmental or economic concerns, which is a common misinterpretation, but includes environmental, economic, and social concerns.

The concept of "sustainable development" has proven to be difficult for many people to fully understand. Perhaps that is because it requires integrative rather than compartmentalized thinking, and is not well adapted to explanation in five-second media "sound bites". Environmental, economic and social concerns must be addressed simultaneously. Very simply: if we fail to protect the environment we will have no jobs, no communities, and no future; but if we attempt to impose environmental solutions that ignore economic and social realities, we will face disaster of a different sort. Practitioners of the scientific

professions, for example, need to occasionally put aside their technical and scientific training and reflect upon the broader consequences of what they do.

The first objective along the path towards sustainability will be to integrate consideration of all environmental, economic, and social impacts into all of society's decisions; whether these take place within governments, corporate boardrooms, or other institutions of civil society. Reaching this objective will in turn require a review of decision-making processes (particularly the application of consensus-building as a decision-making tool in settings that previously have neither acknowledged consensus-building as a need nor an opportunity). It may even require a complete reconstruction of many existing institutions, structures, and decision making methods – some of which are quite resistant to change. Finally, the integration of environmental, economic, and social thought into those decision-making processes will necessitate the utilization of human knowledge from the widest possible range of sources and across the widest possible range of disciplines.

Environmental, social, and economic concerns are frequently described as "the three pillars of sustainability". While this is a useful analogy in the sense of acknowledging the requirement for each to ensure the stability of the whole, it is also problematic. Pillars are very solid and distinct objects. Perhaps a better image for a discussion of how to integrate these needs is that of three puddles of paint on a plate, slightly stirred. The interfaces (social-economic, social-environmental, environmental-economic) are blurred and indistinct, and there is great difficulty in separating one from the other. Not only that, but within each component exists a myriad of subsidiary interfaces.

Environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) and business have significant expertise and are powerful advocates for the environmental and economic components of sustainability, respectively. Unions, too, have a particular expertise regarding the environment and the economy that differs from that of ENGOs and business. However, the social component of sustainability is the component that unions feel has been rather neglected in the debate; and coincidentally is the area in which we are most uniquely qualified. It falls therefore upon labour to speak up for social needs - as it has so often in the past.

As a minimum, trade unions believe that we can start addressing the social component of sustainability by promoting or developing, and fully implementing:

- the International Labour Organization (ILO) Core Labour Standards;
- the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- "Just Transition" programs (see explanation in following paragraph);
- The United Nations Secretary-General's "Global Compact" Initiative;
- Industry Voluntary Initiatives and Agreements

Of these five, "Just Transition" programs occupy a unique position within labour's view of sustainable development. Briefly, a "Just Transition" program ensures that the costs and benefits of moving towards a more sustainable future are shared fairly; and especially, that the workers, families and communities who rely on industries or activities dubbed "unsustainable" by society are protected during the transition to more sustainable activities. First and foremost, "Just Transition" programs are a necessary prerequisite to making any substantial progress on environmental issues. Secondly, the existence and quality of "Just Transition" programs are indicators of social sustainability.

Fairly standard and well accepted indicators of economic performance exist. Environmental indicators of various sorts have been proposed and there is an emerging consensus on at least the broader categories of what they are. Clearly, however, social indicators have been the poor relation in policy analysis.

Industry, broadly, has made progress in recognizing some of the environmental imperatives of sustainable development and integrating them into its economic decision-making. Labour applauds this progress and encourages its continuation but notes that the recognition and integration of social needs into corporate decision making has made far less progress.

Every industrial sector has its own particular challenges and concerns, with considerable variation between and within regions and sectors. Sustainability for any sector can only be achieved when each of those challenges and concerns is dealt with in a consensus-seeking, integrative fashion that attempts to balance the environmental, economic, and social imperatives of sustainability.

TOURISM

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the tourism industry, one of the world's largest employers, employs 207 million people. Despite some concerns, trade unions see the future of the tourism sector in a generally positive light. Tourism can play an important educational role in moving society towards sustainability. Despite the recent shock to the global tourism industry caused by terrorist attacks, it would be wrong, in our opinion, to adopt a defensive approach. Governments should take the initiative and develop the capacity, in terms of research and data collection, to create tourism plans in partnership with stakeholders - especially workers. This is particularly true in those regions where there are few alternative sources of income.

A national or multi-national tourism plan would allow for the development of tourist regions while minimizing the potential negative impacts, while maximizing employment opportunities and assuring good working conditions. For example, developing the market for eco-tourism requires the maintenance of large and relatively unspoiled natural areas. In many parts of the world, traditional tourist regions are showing wear and tear from over-use. Cultural tourism requires a respect for cultural diversity, historical treasures, and liveable city-scapes. And finally, a tourism plan would anticipate the effects of vehicle, marine and air traffic on non-tourists and non-tourist regions.

Elaborating on the above, an effective tourism plan would:

- guarantee the rights of tourism workers, including the ILO core labour standards;
- protect lands and spaces by controlling urban sprawl;
- provide for sustainable transportation systems to facilitate tourism; including diversified modes of travel such as trains, bicycles, walking trails, etc. rather than solely aircraft and automobiles.
- implement a scheme of sustainability labelling of tourist facilities;
- include a plan for publicizing sustainable tourist sites and activities;

However, if tourism is to play a positive role in development, the industry also needs to pay attention to some of the negative aspects of tourism. For one example, the industry must do a better job of looking after the needs of its employees. Workers in this sector continue to experience low wages and poor

working conditions relative to their skills. For another example of the need for planning, some ecotourism sites must really be restricted in the number of visitors that are accepted, in order to prevent the attraction from becoming degraded.

A significant problem for the tourism industry is the health and safety of its workers. Workers in the tourism industry, in direct contact with the public, are especially vulnerable to harassment and threats of violence; and occasionally real violence. In fact the tourism industry leads all other industries in the prevalence of these hazards. Job insecurity and unusual working hours also contribute to stress and ill health.

For some tourism workers in some regions, the following hazards can be considered occupational hazards as well:

- HIV/Aids;
- Access to clean water;
- Access to sustainable sources of energy;
- Containment of waterborne diseases;
- Access to affordable housing;
- Access to primary education for their children.

Even the most optimistic will have to concede that, for tourism to be truly a “sunrise” rather than a “sunset” industry, it will have to do a better job of: respecting the rights of its present workers, especially the right to organize into a trade union; creating opportunities for new workers; and willingness to participate in consensus decision making about the sector.

Tourism can be educational. Tourism can create a bridge of understanding between the excessive consumption of the developed world; and the underdevelopment of the developing world. Nearly 25-million people in the world die each year because of a lack of clean water and adequate sanitation, and many citizens of the developed world are simply unaware of the problem. It is impossible to talk about sustainable development without addressing the issues of poverty and inequality.

Conclusions:

International tourism has grown every year since the second world war. However, the events of September 11, 2001 appear to have had a lasting and negative effect on global tourism. For example, by December, 2001, the number of tourists to France, the world's most-visited country, has fallen 20 per cent. Many travel related business have gone bankrupt, and the remaining operators have been restructuring and shedding workers. Business travel, hotels, car rental companies and other travel-related business are generally seeing reduced usage. Despite this, trade unions predict growth in this sector over the longer term. The growing demand for vacation time is unlikely to be reversed for long. For many people in the developed world, travel and tourism are looked upon as necessary stress relief against ever more demanding daily life .

However, the tourism industry needs to do much more to respect the rights of its workers in some areas.

As stated above, these include the ILO Core Labour Standards, the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the U.N. Secretary-General's Global Compact. In addition, it needs to get serious about sustainability indicators and labelling of tourist sites and tour operators. The tourism industry needs

to open up to provide greater transparency and disclosure of its activities. Industry voluntary initiatives and codes of conduct can play a role in supplementing, but not substituting for, sound legislative and regulatory frameworks. Finally, it needs to partner with its own employees in consensus decision making for the planning and implementation of a tourism plan.