



**Statement of ILO Director General Juan Somavia  
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**Investing in Green Growth and Decent Work**

We are seeing here today the seeds of a fair transition to a new sustainable development consensus.

The emerging global consciousness that brings us together is about much more than environment. It's about the need for a profound transformation in the way we produce and consume – and the commitment to working together to enable the economy and society to effectively make that transition.

The prevailing growth and investment model has delivered quantity at the expense of quality. We have seen economic growth without quality jobs and with tremendous strains to the environment. The “grow now-jobs later”, “grow now – clean up later” models are not working for people and communities, let alone for our children and grandchildren.

How do you construct win-win solutions?

In the ILO we are tripartite – decisions are made collectively by employers, workers and governments. We are in the business of just transitions through dialogue.

**What we hear people saying is that we need a different approach. An approach that better balances the democratic voice of society, the regulatory function of the state, and the productive role of the market. An approach that gives people a say in the decisions that will affect their life. An approach that recognizes and rewards the double dividend of green growth and decent work.**

**That's why we have set in motion the Green Jobs Initiative, together with UNEP, ITUC and others. It is our contribution to the development of a UN system-wide strategy on climate change. The objective is to promote and identify the many technological innovations, investment opportunities, enterprise and quality job creating potential of a sustainable development path. At the same time, we want to look at the adaptation and social protection needs of enterprises and workers affected by the production and consumption shifts involved.**

Let me point to three areas of common focus.

**First, generating sustainable enterprises with decent jobs. The combination of green technology and decent work constitutes what companies are increasingly realizing as part of their competitive edge. I would call it the social competitiveness of companies.**

The evidence for the potential of green jobs is clear and the list is growing by the day:

- \* Germany has already created hundreds of thousands of green jobs in the renewable energy industry and in energy efficiency and is designed to create many more.
- \* US workers in the environmental industry outnumber those in the pharmaceutical industry 10 to 1.
- \* China has 1,000 firms making solar thermal equipment, providing employment to some 600,000 workers.
- \* In Bangladesh over 100,000 photovoltaic panels have been installed providing light to homes, thousands of women are employed directly and many more have started new businesses through the Grameen movement.

Example after example. Enterprise creation. Small enterprise development. It's important to remember that so many of these green jobs are home-grown, rooted in the communities where they are created. They cannot be outsourced or shipped away.

We also have to acknowledge that good green jobs do not come naturally. They are not decent by definition. We have to pay attention to the quality of those jobs. Throughout the world, for example, millions of workers are involved in recycling discarded computers and mobile phones. But far too often the first things to go in the recycle bin are safety and health rules.

**Second, social protection.**

**Whatever pro-investment job creation policies are in place, displacements and downsides are inevitable. We need to think from the beginning about the impact on people – mobilize policies that ensure a just transition.**

One way to get it right is by learning from our mistakes.

Exhibit A: trade policies. For years, global policies focused on the upsides of trade. On the jobs created – not the jobs lost. On the business that open shop – not the enterprises that shut down. That huge policy blind spot has fed much of the trade backlash. 'You told me this was win-win, then why did I just lose my job?'

**We can't make the same mistake with the environment. We need policies that assure workers that a green environment for society does not mean a pink slip for them.**

Where there are downsides and jobs lost – let's invest to make sure there is training and opportunity.

We're seeing worker shortages of solar panel installers in California, the renewables industry in Germany. This is also an opportunity for us ramp up investment in green training centres in the developing world. New technologies must go hand in hand with sound transition managements.

### **Third, social dialogue**

**We need social dialogue among those most affected by these transitions – workers, employers and governments – to work towards fair policies that are efficient and balanced in their costs and benefits.**

That is the way to make them sustainable and to provide the stable investment framework that everybody agrees is needed. Spain is pointing the way through tripartite roundtables for Kyoto implementation. The Government of Brazil consults trade unions about projects under the Clean Development Mechanism.

Put all this together and I think they form the elements of what I'd call a new sustainable development consensus to mobilize investment to address climate change, generate green jobs and build a better and fair world.