

COSATU:

INC-4: Development of an International Legally Binding Instrument to End Plastic Pollution

South African Workers Need a Just Transition

12/04/2024



Impact of Humanity

- The impact of humanity & economic development are having a devastating impact on the planet, environment, life & people.
- We see it in climate change, floods, drought, rising temperatures, declining plant & animal life & health of people, particularly working-class communities.
- Plastic bags long displaced the Protea as South Africa's national flower.
- Change is needed but it needs to take workers, industries & communities with.

What is to be done?

- World needs to work together.
- Needs to be a South African plan.
- Need for an internationally binding instrument that compels all nations and industries to act.
- Instrument needs to take into account different levels of economic development, resources, employment & needs of nations.
- South Africa has a 41% unemployment, the United States a 3% rate.
- INC-4 presents a fair framework for engagement.

Transition Needs to be Just

- All too often government signs agreements & forgets about workers, communities & value chains.
- Industry has one mandate, profits. It is not compelled to worry about value chains, workers or communities.
- South Africa is battling a 41% unemployment rate & deeply entrenched poverty & inequality.
- Workers fear losing their jobs & benefits.
- Value chains & host communities are at risk.

Need for a Social Compact

- Need for a joint programme of action comprised of government, business, labour & civil society.
- Provide fair time frames that accommodate developmental needs with environmental challenges.
- Ensure no worker or community is left behind.
- Provide financial & other support for businesses needing to adjust.
- Provide skills training for jobs of not just today but also tomorrow for workers.
- Overhaul education curriculum.

Need for a Social Compact

- Targeted support for SMMEs & emerging sectors.
- Utilised public employment programmes & SMME funding to help formalise informal workers & emerging SMMEs.
- Tax incentives to encourage change.
- Anchor these programmes through Industrial Master Plans.
- Firm time frames.
- Continuous monitoring & evaluation & interventions as needed.

Conclusion

- Change is urgent & must be just.
- We must be smart & not reckless in our transition.
- Exploit the tools & resources available.
- Remember this is about workers, families, communities, the environment, plant & animal life.
- We must move but ensure we bring all with us.
- Workers are fearful & their fears need to be addressed.
- We cannot afford to be divided or leave anyone behind.