

**“Global Crises: the need to go beyond transnational solidarity in the struggle against the expansion of free trade agreements”**

*“Trade is not responsible for the crisis, trade is the victim”*

Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the World Trade Organization – December 2009

Resistance against the expansion of free trade policies has been important to help building new forms of transnational solidarity among trade unions. It also led to an increased articulation of struggles at the global level between trade unions and other social actors such as social movements, farmers’ movements, “altermondialist” groups, as well as a diverse range of NGOs. This global articulation of movements has helped to bring the WTO Doha Round negotiations to a halt.

The crisis of the Doha-Round in the WTO, and the explosion of the financial and economic crisis, both affected the strategies of the European Union, the US, and of the emerging economies like China, India and Brazil. This led to a strong change of the free trade agenda of the economic elites, such as a shift away from multilateral negotiations to bi-regional and bilateral free trade negotiations.

The different social actors, and in particular trade unions who had dedicated much energy to analyse the impact of trade negotiations in the WTO, had to shift their attention to an increasing number of bilateral negotiations of Free-Trade Agreements (FTAs), Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) or Association Agreements in the case of the EU.

At the same time the increasing awareness of the environmental and climate crisis, shifted the attention away from trade issues by an increasing number of CSOs, moving towards new hot spots, such as climate change. This trend continued with the bursting of the housing bubble in the U.S. and the financial, economic and social crisis that it has triggered. The challenges posed by the austerity measures adopted in many countries in the Global North became the major priority of the trade union movement in many countries affected by the financial and economic crisis.

As we observe a weakening of the traditional “centres of power”, today facing the crisis, we also see, on the other side, a changing role of the emerging economies. A new balance of power in the global economy is being designed: the EU or the U.S. can no longer negotiate with countries like China, India or Brazil (and others) based on the assumption to get what they want. And the EU and U.S. external trade strategy, which is based on the free-trade ideology and serving the interests of their economic elites, is having an increasing impact on their own economies, especially on sectors like manufacturing and services, with a clear impact on their social models.

Against this changing framework and new developments, the strategies of trade unions and social actors to build transnational solidarity need to be assessed and further developed.

**Trade unions and their strategies to build transnational solidarity so far**

Since the mid-80ies, governments, and in particular the U.S. and the EU, have started to push for a massive deregulation of the economies via so-called Free Trade and Investment Agreements (FTAs). The Uruguay Round, started in 1986 by the members of the General Agreement on Trade

---

<sup>1</sup> *Alexandra Strickner is President of Attac Austria (<http://www.attac.at/>), Bruno Ciccaglione is the Coordinator of the Seattle to Brussels Network (<http://www.s2bnetwork.org/>).*

and Tariffs, in order to achieve further trade liberalization, in 1994 brought to the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), that formally opened its doors one year later. Under the presidency of Bill Clinton, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico was concluded, entering into force in 1994. Soon after the negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAAs) were started, aiming at creating a Free Trade Zone from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Workers and trade unions feared the threat of a global race to the bottom as a consequence of this free trade agenda. For this reasons trade union movement developed a set of tools and strategies, as over the course of the past two decades, to fight against FTAs and to avoid negative impacts on workers' rights and working conditions: the demand for transparency and participation in the negotiations; the demand for social clauses within FTAs and the connected lobbying campaigns; the building of cross border alliances with other trade unions; the building of alliances with other social movements, the mobilizations against FTAs as well as the development and promotion of alternatives to the current trading system.

The demand for transparency and participation in the negotiations has been the first and most unanimous demand of the labour movement, although this happened for different reasons and with different expectations: some trade unions hoped to be able to affect the contents of the negotiations, others pushed for transparency simply to have a better access to information, to be in a better position to pressure governments in the political realm. While in most cases governments did not respond to this demand, in some cases progressive governments positively responded to this demand, although with ambiguity. One interesting example in this respect is Brazil. The Lula government allowed trade unions and social movements to participate the negotiations on the FTAAs/ALCA, while it blocked the same demand in the case of the negotiations between the MERCOSUR and the European Union. In the first case the government was not interested in a positive conclusion of the negotiations, and consequently the presence of trade unions and social actors in the negotiations was a calculated strategy to expose unbridgeable differences. In the case of the EU-MERCOSUR negotiations, the Brazilian government aims at a conclusion of the negotiation. With trade unions and social actors in Brazil being against this agreement, their participation is not in the governments' interest.

The strategy to demand the inclusion of social clauses in FTAs, and lobbying campaigns to support this demand, has been a very controversial approach inside the trade union movement, as among other social actors. The idea of this strategy: to include provisions in the FTAs which would guarantee the protection of worker rights. The experiences and positions taken in the past are very differentiated. In the case of the WTO, different groups expressed strong opposition to the inclusion of social clauses, although for very different reasons<sup>2</sup>. Anyway the main argument against a social clause has been ideological, based on the idea that "*labour rights are non-trade issues and should not be allowed to "contaminate" trade rules*". UN Secretary General Kofi Annan seconded this point of view<sup>3</sup> in 1999. Most trade unions, on the contrary, have always argued that it would be important to have a binding `social clause` in the WTO agreements<sup>4</sup>. While at the multilateral level

---

2 The critique of protectionist motives aiming to maintain competitive advantages or privileged positions for the northern countries was often joined by the most neoliberal analysts. See the neoliberal economist Jagdish Bhagwati and 98 other intellectuals statement: "*Third World Intellectuals and NGOs Statement against Linkage*" published in 1999 - <http://www2.bc.edu/~anderson/twin-sal12.pdf>

3 "*The rules-based multilateral trading system was not designed to address these non-trade issues [meaning labor rights, human rights, and environmental protection]. To call on it to do so would expose the trading system to great strain and the risk of increasing protectionism while failing to produce the desired results*" - Joint Statement on the Global Compact proposed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, July 5, 1999 - [http://www.ppionline.org/ppi\\_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=108&subsecID=128&contentID=649](http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=108&subsecID=128&contentID=649)

4 Both in the labor movement and in social movements worldwide, this is not unanimously accepted. Even considering the multilateral framework the right one where labor and social standards should be debated and promoted, many have a more radical approach to the WTO, which they don't consider the right and legitimate place for this discussion.

in WTO agreements, labour rights protections were not included, such provisions can be found in a number of bilateral and regional FTAs. The U.S. has several FTAs which include labour standards conditionality; Canada includes labour rights obligations in side agreements to its FTAs; Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay have included labour commitments and institutions as part of the architecture of the MERCOSUR<sup>5</sup>. Also the EU FTAs include labour standards. The provisions in the different agreements are substantially different as regards the terms of the obligations that are undertaken by the parties in such agreements (e.g. which labour rights are to be protected) and of the enforcement mechanisms that are created to encourage or to penalize parties that fail to carry out their commitments. Trade unions mostly used the demand to include social clauses within trade agreements as a tool to limit the damages for workers. However it was clear to most trade unions, that such clauses alone would not successfully protect labour rights and their inclusion is not sufficient to support an FTA. European trade unions, on the contrary seem to see the inclusion of labour provisions as their main demand when facing FTAs

The natural tool for trade unions facing FTAs, was the building of links with the trade unions of the countries involved. This has been challenging in many cases. One good example to illustrate the challenges, is the experience of trade unions of the NAFTA countries. The major Mexican trade unions were supportive of an FTA with the U.S. and Canada, as they hoped to obtain manufacturing jobs in Mexico, with Canadian and U.S. companies moving their plants to Mexico. Canadian and U.S. trade unions were strongly opposing the conclusion of NAFTA out of the understanding of the downward spiral NAFTA would create for labour rights in all of the three countries. But with time trade unions in the Americas gradually succeeded in developing transnational solidarity across North and South America, which led to a common struggle and a successful campaign against the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Such common struggles and voices, on the contrary, have been generally missing when it came to the trade unions of the EU and trade unions of e.g. South Korea, Brazil or India etc. The idea of FTAs benefiting workers in Europe still prevails over a common understanding that EU-FTAs ultimately will neither secure good jobs for European workers, nor provide good jobs for workers in the FTA partner countries. One of the few cases where the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is clearly opposing and campaigning against an EU FTA is the case of the EU-Colombia-Peru FTA. Given the severe human rights violations and attacks on trade unions in particular in Colombia, the ETUC actively engages in the non-ratification work of this EU-FTA. However this engagement does not come out of a general questioning the free-trade approach. Another case is the CETA (the EU-Canada agreement) which is currently being negotiated. EPSU, the European Public Services Union is campaigning in conjunction with the Canadian Labour Congress against this north-north FTA.

Finally the most interesting strategy used by trade unions facing the challenges of FTAs came out of the growing understanding that the free trade agreements were going to change and impact every aspect of people's life. As a consequence, a series of different alliances between trade unions and other social movements emerged, both at the national and transnational level, such as the Action Canada Network (ACN), Common Frontiers in Canada (<http://www.commonfrontiers.ca/>), the Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART, <http://www.art-us.org/>) in the U.S., the Mexican Network for Action on Free Trade in Mexico (<http://www.rmalc.org.mx/index.shtml>), the Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples (REBRIP, [http://www.rebrip.org.br/\\_rebrip/](http://www.rebrip.org.br/_rebrip/)), the Forum on FTAs in India (<http://www.forumagainstftas.net/>). All of these alliances had the same objective: building broad coalitions, involving many different actors such as trade unions, farmers' organizations, women organizations, development NGOs and environmental groups, religious groups and even some small employers organizations. These multi-sectorial alliances at the national level, involving different

---

5 For a wide comparison of the different approaches in including labor rights in FTAs see: "Protecting Labor Rights Through Trade Agreements: An Analytical Guide, Sandra Polasky, Journal of International Law and Policy, July 14, 2004 - <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/2004-07-polaski-JILP.pdf>

social actors including trade unions, would also cooperate with other multi-sectorial alliances of other countries involved in FTA negotiations. In the Americas this kind of alliances was somehow consolidated with the birth of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA, <http://www.asc-hsa.org/>). This alliance also has played a role in the birth of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA-CSA - <http://www.csa-csi.org/>). These alliances and processes helped building the basis for an alternative vision of trade relations, and consequently to develop common demands by trade unions or other social actors. Alternatives to free trade agreements such as those promoted within ALBA have its roots in the alternatives developed by the Hemispheric Social Alliance (<http://www.asc-hsa.org/>). It is also noteworthy that the analysis which is today proposed by the TUCA-CSA, not only opposes FTAs, but goes even beyond the concept of *fair trade*. It seeks to design a model of integration that is an alternative to free trade, not only because it proposes alternative trade rules, but because it aims at moving away from neoliberal policies, by giving a new centrality to the State, and proposes also new democratic and participatory processes. Even if not every trade union of the Americas is concretely and consistently operating in harmony with the formal position of the TUCA-CSA, it is clear that the labour movements of the Americas follow a path that is unique, and so far have obtained some genuine achievements. To stop the FTAA is only one of these achievements. Today similar experiences are developed in Asia and Africa.

The presented tools and strategies have been used by trade unions in order to build new forms of transnational solidarity and face the race to the bottom imposed by the free-trade agenda. Nevertheless these tools are not common to every trade union and in different regions substantial differences to face free trade policies can be observed. While trade unions of the Americas and Asia developed very critical positions on FTAs and even started to develop alternative visions, European trade unions have been, and continue to be, more pro-free trade. European trade unions – compared to their counterparts in other regions - have engaged much less with other social actors fighting against free trade agreements.

Despite these strategies and some successes of trade unions – together with other social actors to stop some Free Trade Agreements, the trend towards a race to the bottom continues. What has become clear by now is that Free Trade Agreements are only one of the many elements and instruments which have advanced a model of production and consumption which is at the heart of the many crises which are surfacing now. The struggle against free trade agreements has been a good starting point for trade unions to reconnect and develop new forms of transnational solidarity among themselves but also with other social actors. But given the new political and economic context, the resistance against FTAs is not enough to stop the race to the bottom.

### **Global Crises: Why we have to go beyond the struggle against free trade agreements?**

After a decade of struggles against FTAs we find ourselves in a new political and economic context. In 2007 the financial crisis – a crisis known until then only in the countries of the Global South – has finally reached industrialized countries. With the explosion of the housing bubble in the U.S. In 2007, not only hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S. lost their homes, but the whole banking system in the U.S. and the EU went into crisis and these economies into recession. In the same year soaring food prices – a result of deregulated financial and food markets - led to a worsening of the already existing hunger crisis, making 200 million more people (in total 1 billion) go hungry to bed. In various developing countries hunger revolts occurred as a consequence. At the heart of the hunger crisis are failed agriculture and trade policies which give priority to food exports over food production for local consumption, and replacing public policies to regulate food prices with market based mechanisms. Soaring oil prices and the UN Reports on climate change in 2008, triggered a new debate around the model of production based on fossil fuels, and the ecological limits of the

exploitation of nature. In 2009, almost 30 years after the debates about the “Limits of Growth” (<http://limitstogrowth.net/>), the discussion about it re-emerged. It is clear that a number of natural resources, exploited and massively overused, will be used up within this century. It is clear that the current model of production and consumption is over-exploiting nature. In 2011 the worldwide human population is projected to use 135% of the resources the earth can generate this year (see Earth Overshoot Day - [www.footprintnetwork.org/de/index.php/GFN/page/earth\\_overshoot\\_day/](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/de/index.php/GFN/page/earth_overshoot_day/)). This crisis is a new stage of the failing capitalist model of consumption and production that does not recognize or considers the resources limits or the ecological impacts.

Since 2010, and especially in the recent months, what started as a financial crisis, is developing into a public debt crisis for Europe and the US. Despite the announcements that followed the explosion of the financial crisis, governments both in the U.S. and the EU left financial markets and the banking sector largely unregulated. Instead of dealing with root causes, governments are crafting on the one hand austerity measures, leading to an acceleration of the social crisis and an increasing poverty. On the other hand, these governments advance the commodification of nature in order to create new investment possibilities for capital seeking returns. The UNEP project “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” ([www.teebweb.org](http://www.teebweb.org)) give an insight to plans, how ecosystems and biodiversity can be submitted under the logic of financial markets. Finally, we also face a serious democratic crisis: we observe a declining trust of citizens, in different countries and regions, in their elected representatives, as they do not perceive any longer that politicians are acting in the public interest, but mainly in the interest of corporations and the economic and political elites. At the same time we see new social movements emerging and openly addressing this crisis, promoting struggles for real democracy now, as a pre-condition to advance alternative policies in the interest of the people and the nature, instead of corporate interests.

A decade ago, when the building of transnational solidarity and the struggle against the expansion of free trade agreements was at the centre of the debate, most of these crises and contradictions already existed. Yet large parts of the people living in industrialized countries had not yet experienced them. Now the problems and contradictions of the capitalist model of production and consumption are put on the table in particular in the EU and the U.S., leading to an ever wider exclusion of people and the destruction of democratic spaces and processes.

As a consequence, the challenges for social actors, such as for trade unions, social movements and civil society organisations alike, are today far beyond stopping policies which negatively impact jobs and social conditions. More than ever we are confronted to radically rethink and rebuild the ways we produce and consume, in order to address the multiple crises and to overcome the current economic model, based on the values of profit seeking, competition and the assumption of endless availability of natural resources. At the core must be the vision of the right to a good life for all people, defined as the satisfaction of basic human needs, in a way where we recognize and respect the limits of nature, use resources in a just and sustainable way.

### **The need to develop our own visions for the societies we want to live in**

Despite the unfolding of the various dimensions of the global crises and a series of governments' summits – whether it is in the framework of the UN (see the climate change conferences) or in the framework of the G20 - the responses of governments to the multiple crises are business as usual. In terms of regulating the financial markets, only small regulatory changes have been introduced until now (e.g. higher capital quotas for banks, more transparency etc.). Banks continue to remain too big to fail and most products and actors remain unregulated. In relation to the ecological challenges, the private sector is embracing the challenge and tries to use the ecological and energy crisis as a chance to revive the profit making machinery. Governments and the private sector alike are promoting today what they call the “Green Economy” or a “Green New Deal”. When looking closer

at the specific proposals, it becomes clear that their concept of “Green Economy” is based on leaving the capitalist functioning of the economy untouched.

One example to illustrate this is the EU’s growth strategy for this decade, called “Europe 2020”. *Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* are the key words by which the EU governments try to portray a solution out of the crisis. The “Green Economy vision” proposed by European companies, and EU governments, is about keeping the position of EU companies, and the EU itself developed in the past decades: to remain the biggest exporter in the world (European companies exported €1.3 trillion in goods and services in 2009 (13% of the GDP), and to remain the biggest provider and host of Foreign Direct Investments in the world. But this was made possible due to cheap raw materials imports, cheap inputs for the industrial sector and cheap commodities, in order to export very expensive products and “innovative” services globally. This model, based on the exploitation of the planet and of the people – especially in the Global South – has been a key element of the European development for decades. Even European workers benefited of this model. Looking at the proposed policies and strategies – from the Raw Materials Initiative to investment and trade policies, as new FTAs – it is clear that the EU economic elites do not intend to change the economic model which secured their position so far. Contextualizing their objectives in the new context, their vision is to develop the EU as an economic space which develops, produces and sells green technologies and products, continuing to use the resources of other regions – from energy to minerals etc. In this vision, countries in the Global South remain providers of raw materials as well as buyers of European technologies, goods and services. The model of production and consumption in Europe is not put into question, but technological and market based solutions are presented as the means to overcome today’s resources and energy challenges. What is anyway clear is that if workers benefited in the past from this model, this will hardly be the case for the future.

Indeed, European economic elites acknowledge the changing power relationships in the world, and are ready to sacrifice even further what is commonly known as the “European Social Model” – the welfare state. In the Communication of the EU Commission on its renewed trade and investment strategy, called with emphasis, “Trade, Growth and World Affairs”, presented in 2010, the EU Commission admits: “By 2015, 90% of world growth will be generated outside Europe, with a third from China alone”, and “Developing and emerging countries are likely to account for nearly 60% of world GDP by 2030” (today it is less than 50%). The EU Commission states that:

- if we want increase market access – for EU companies - in key areas (where the growth will be generated), Europe must be ready to sacrifice something;
- obstacles to businesses come not much anymore from tariffs, but from regulations (public procurement in key sectors like public transports, medical devices, pharmaceuticals and green technologies)
- coherence should be granted between EU demands to its trade partners and EU internal rules (this means more liberalizations and privatizations inside the EU to obtain them by the partners)

Furthermore the EU demands a “fair and undistorted access” to raw materials and energy, indicating that distortions in that access would be seen as attempts of governments to control and manage raw materials exploitation. We are witnessing an increasing conflict between the EU and China about access to a key raw material: lithium. The EU rhetoric on green and sustainable development needs to secure access to lithium in order to develop new green high-tech products. Lithium is available in a couple of countries only, like Bolivia and Chile and China. While the EU seems able to continue having free and cheap access to lithium in Bolivia and Chile, this is not the case with China. China has started to introduce restrictions to the exports of lithium, in order to develop its own “green” technologies internally. The EU brought China in front of the WTO, which ruled against restrictions to exports for raw materials, but this will hardly stop China’s attempts to protect the development of its industrial sector. Another key element of the EU strategy are EU plans to define a “new” Investments strategy, which is capable to grant a “fair” environment to investors, but this will imply

to offer stronger protection to foreign investors in Europe too, thus limiting the ability of governments to regulate in favour of public interest

The recent strategic documents and policies presented by the EU, but also by other important countries – whether it is the U.S. or different emerging economies such as China, Brazil or India, leave no doubt that economic and political elites are not willing to make any fundamental changes to the current economic model. Economic growth, expanding exports and technical and market based solutions are proposed to deal with the different dimension of the crisis – whether it is the social, economic or ecological crisis.

The question for trade unions and social movements alike is: what is their answer to this clear cut vision of economic and political elites? Do they share this vision? Do trade unions believe we can “export ourselves out of the crisis”? Is the greening of the economy enough to deal with the resources and energy challenge? Is it possible to reach concrete transnational solidarity without questioning the ideology of competition and the “raison d’être” of economic activity?

Taking a closer look at the vision of the economic and political elites, it becomes clear that this vision does not take into account the limits of natural resources, that puts the satisfaction of basic needs of people at its core or that acknowledges that the ecological and climate crisis is deeply rooted in an unsustainable model of production and consumption and unsustainable lifestyles that had been created.

### **Questioning our lifestyles – and building new visions and imaginaries for a good life for all**

For an increasing number of social movements and people it is clear that the multiple crisis we are facing can only be dealt with by changing the model of production and consumption. This also requires a further development of today’s democratic systems. To change the capitalist model of production and consumption implies also to reflect and change our lifestyles. Some of the “solutions” proposed by economic elites look attractive, and hence make it challenging to engage in developing our own vision. To take the example of replacing the current car park with electric cars: this solution seems attractive, as it suggests that the possibility for everyone to have a car remains untouched. It also suggests that today’s car producers will continue to make cars in the future and this will secure jobs in this sector. But this does not take into account the limits of natural resources, any concept of resources justice and also the question of where the needed energy for millions of electric cars would come from. These existing contradictions show the need for trade unions, social movements and NGOs, to develop their own alternatives, connecting different challenges and elements of the crisis, and dealing with the North-South contradictions in a different way. We need to start developing a vision over how do we want to live and how should our societies and economies work, based on a common set of values. This would also require to question the global division of labour and to develop answers to the challenges of resources and climate justice. It also requires the building of a new vision and imaginaries of what a good life for all can be, where the physical limits of nature are recognised and respected, and where we question also the values we associate with labour and “jobs”.

This building of a new vision has to be done at all levels – from the local to the global. From us as Europeans this would mean that people in Europe will have to build the vision for a good life for all, taking that is not any longer based on the exploitation of nature and people in the Global South, respecting thus the right of people in the Global South to the same good life for all. In particular trade unions should draw from the experiences of those who more than hundred years ago build the workers movement. They also developed a vision for a better life and developed clear ideas on how all workers could have access to education, health, decent housing or public transport etc. They also had a clear vision of distributing jobs more evenly as well as democratic rights. The two key

slogans for the workers movement at the global level at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had been the call for an 8hour working day and the right for all citizens to participate in elections. Trade unions and social actors today face the challenge to develop again their own ideas and visions, and to engage not only in defensive struggles but to get into the offensive again. This is a big challenge as ultimately implies to reflect and challenge our own values and definitions as regards what is considered a good life, moving towards a needs based economy, which is built on the use of less goods and resources and a higher quality of life.

### **The process has started - Existing experiences**

There are already many people and social actors in the Global North and South that have started to engage in processes and discussions to develop our own vision for a good life and transition paths towards it. An increasing number of voices openly address the need to move away from the current model of production and consumption. The peoples' summit in Copenhagen (Klimaforum), next to the UN Climate Change negotiations in 2009, had as its main slogan "System Change, not Climate Change". In the final declaration the social movements clearly denounce the technical and market based solutions promoted by governments (such as the Clean Development Mechanism or Carbon Trading) to solve the Climate crisis, and assert the need to rebuild our economies in order to address the various dimensions of the crisis. Resistance against unsustainable energy projects (from shale gas and tar sands extraction, to new coal mines or the expansion of nuclear power) is increasing, and at the same time alternatives to a fossil fuel based society and economy are built. The transition town movement in the UK ([www.transitionnetwork.org/](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/)) or the food sovereignty movement (see for instance: [www.nyelenieurope.net](http://www.nyelenieurope.net)), are just two examples illustrating this dynamic.

But also trade unions in different regions and countries are starting to engage in processes and alliances which aim at developing a new vision for our economies and societies. In the U.S. a broad range of trade unions has developed, together with environmental groups, the so-called "Blue Green Alliance" (<http://www.bluegreenalliance.org/>), in Canada the "Green Economy Network" (<http://www.greeneconomynet.ca/>) has been built, in the UK the "One-million-Climate-Change-Jobs Alliance" (<http://www.climate-change-jobs.org/>) exists, in Austria the "Ways out of the crisis Alliance" ([www.wege-aus-der-krise.at](http://www.wege-aus-der-krise.at)) works on this challenges etc. At the European level the ETUC has developed with environmental groups the so-called "Spring Alliance" (<http://www.springalliance.eu/>), trying to address some of these issues, but remaining ultimately a top down initiative, contrary to the other initiatives mentioned, which are grass root and bottom up initiatives.

Most of the existing initiatives, in particular those where trade unions are involved, are taking place at the national level to date, and not all of them have the global dimension embraced in the alternatives they develop. If we want to successfully build the vision and the transition towards new economic models which put at their core a good life for all, based on cooperation and the sustainable and just use of resources, we need to build also transnational debates and articulations to confront the locally and nationally built alternatives with possible contradictions. If we want to overcome the multiple crises, we need again to build the new and emerging movement as an internationalist one. Trade unions must be part of this process and contribute to the building of this vision for a "just transition" to alternative economic models. Otherwise they risk serving the vision imposed by the economic elites which are responsible for the multiple crises.