



**INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS  
AFRICAN REGIONAL ORGANISATION**

**CLOSING REMARKS BY MR. ANDREW KAILEMBO,  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF ICFTU-AFRO AT THE AFRICAN REGIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON LABOUR AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
28 - 29 JULY, JOHANNESBURG**

**The representatives of SustainLabour;  
The representatives of UN Agencies (UNEP, WHO and ILO);  
The representative of CCOO;  
Brothers and sisters from the trade union fraternity;  
Invited Guests:**

I am delighted to give some brief remarks at the closing ceremony of this conference on labour and the environment and to sincerely thank the organizers for the professional manner under which we have conducted our work since yesterday. I am sure I will be speaking on behalf of my fellow esteemed participants present here if I say that the overall achievements derived from this conference are a manifestation of the professional efficiency of the conference organizers, supporters and financiers. In this regard, the ICFTU-AFRO wishes to pay special tribute to SustainLabour, COSATU, UNEP and CCOO for the joint efforts in ensuring a smooth flow of events.

For the sake of brevity and evaluation of our two-day conference, let us recall the overall objectives of our conference. The main objective of this conference was to develop a framework for discussion and adopt common strategies for action on sustainable

development by African trade unions. I am sure you will all agree with me that we have done exactly that.

Dear colleagues,

It has come out very clearly in the past two days of the conference that trade unionists can play, and have played, an important role in the environment and the overall sustainable development agenda. Although in a limited scale, the trade union movement in Africa has been an active partner in the design and implementation of emerging approaches to environmental action. What we have done at this Conference is to augment the resolutions arrived at the January 2006 Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment in Nairobi by further attesting on the diverse subjects, such as the role of decent employment and poverty alleviation on environmental protection; integrating the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development with a rights-based approach; building networks for empowering local and national organisations; and the establishment of effective and democratic governance to ensure sustainable development.

Brothers and sisters,

During the conference, we learnt how poverty has been exacerbated by environmental damage and we must therefore make all efforts to protect and conserve our rich continent. Apart from this, we listened to case studies, discussed and debated on a range of other sustainable development issues such as HIV/AIDS, occupational and public health including the effects of hazardous chemicals that are affecting us from achieving our decent work agenda. On this note, you may recall the case studies from Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania.

Dear colleagues,

We critically looked at the draft declaration that was presented to us and made major improvements on it to suit our own situations. This declaration will guide our interventions at the regional, sub-regional and national level. Comrades, the ball is now in our court, we have to commit ourselves and take the process forward to implement what we have agreed upon so that this does not just become one of those good documents. As the general secretary of

ICFTU-AFRO, I will report to our executive board and propose some proactive steps that our organization—in close collaboration with friendly institutions—could take to take this issue to higher heights.

In the same vein, I would also like to encourage all of you to make sure that your national centres are properly briefed about the objectives and the outcome of this important conference and take steps to develop policies on environmental protection.

I would like to assure you that the ICFTU African Regional Organisation would redouble its efforts in the environmental agenda and build partnerships—at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels—to address this major concern.

Brothers and sisters,

At this point, I would like to summarise some of the practical proposals that we have learnt from this conference and will help us to respond effectively to the challenge of environmental damage:

- we urgently require national legislation, policies, and programmes that will protect the environment, and workers and their families from disease
- we must also use our collective bargaining tool for agreements to achieve decent work and ensure that the environment that we live in is protected
- we should build capacity of trade unionists on various issues on sustainable development and prepare them to take up this issue.
- social dialogue has to be encouraged at all levels
- we should continue to build and encourage partnerships that will help implement our Johannesburg Declaration
- finally, we should demand for corporate governance and social environmental protection and sustainability.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to end by saying that it is the power of our ideas and the force of our commitment that will help us to seriously face the emerging challenges in our continent.

With this few remarks, I wish to once again express our sincere gratitude to the successful partnership of the ICFTU-AFRO, SustainLabour, COSATU and our South African unions, UNEP and ILO in realising our objective. Special word of thank you to our delegates from DOAWTU, Global Union Federations (BWI, ITF, PSI, UNI, ITGLWF, and IUF) and from all our national centres represented here for their solidarity.

I wish you all bon voyage.

Thank you.