

Speech held by Sylvia Borren on the 25th of June, 2009

at **Round Table 3** with as theme: **Present and future impacts of the crisis on, inter alia, employment, trade, investment and development goals and the Millennium Development goals**

at the **UN conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its impact on development, 24-26 June 2009.**

0. My name is Sylvia Borren. I am co-chair of **GCAP**: the Global Call to Action against Poverty and of the **Worldconnectors**. I represent here the 170 million workers organized within the **ITUC**: International Trade Union Confederation, as well as the **116.9 million men, women and children who Stood up and Acted against Poverty last October**. I also bring to you the voices of women in the numerous Poverty Hearings organized by the Feminist Task Force of GCAP. They are but a few of the billion poorest and hungry in the world – nearly all girls and women, as the feminization of poverty is on a sharp increase in this time of multiple crises.

1. The causes and the combined effects of the food-, energy-, climate-, financial-, economic and gender crises are becoming clearer every day. Economic growth does not trickle down to bottom billions of the economic pyramid – but economic crisis certainly does. **What is needed now is not the fixing of old systems that have failed, but transformation.**

2. The good news of this UN conference is that there are many transformative solutions being brought to the table, which are all pointing in the same direction: **INVEST IN PEOPLE.**

Invest in children through quality education

Invest in decent jobs for decent wages for women in the care-industry

Invest in youth employment

Invest in quality public services, health, education, water and sanitation

Invest in sustainable small scale agriculture to solve the food crisis

Invest in micro-finance as the basis of local economies and enterprise

Invest in green infrastructure to adapt to-, and combat climate change.

I can go on.

The ILO has just adopted the Global Jobs Pact which puts employment and social protection at the centre of economic recovery plans.

The Stiglitz Commission report stresses the need for counter-cyclical policies and comes up with financial policies to achieve that.

The ITUC and the many Civil Society actors present here support these measures.

As do many political leaders from developing as well as developed countries.

This is actually a time of unprecedented consensus.

3. The good news is also that the Outcome document of this UN conference has acknowledged the causes and impact and responsibilities of the present combined crises - and that it has adopted some of these solutions – although in a very watered down form: fiscal and economic stimulus packages, a call for increased adherence to ODA commitments, and the establishment of an ad hoc open-

ended Un General Assembly working group – as well as the financial and economic crises being the main debate at the 64th session of the UN General Assembly.

4. The bad news is the notable lack of urgency and political will to move boldly on the many solutions put forward.

The citizens of the world have seen the leaders of the developed world act with unprecedented speed and courage to bail out the banks and parts of the corporate sector. An estimated 20 trillion US dollars, that is 20 thousand billion dollars of our tax money has been used and pledged – actually for those who have been most responsible for causing the situation we find ourselves in.

Yet not even a third of the 30 billion asked for at the UN High Level meeting on the food crisis a year ago has been forthcoming to date.

The Stiglitz Commission recommends that just one percent of the stimulus packages of developed countries to be spent on the developing world, above ODA commitments. That decision (which would be for 200 billion dollars) has not been made here at this conference. Personally I think the solution is to spend dollar for dollar on the kinds of investment in people that civil society including the unions are demanding – for sustainable solutions, for development, for the human rights and perspectives particularly of millions of children, youth and women. Then of the 20 trillion, half at least should have been invested in people, in developing countries.

But the negotiations within the UN are more to do with turf wars about future structures: the asked for Global Panel on systemic risks in the World economy, a new governance structure of the World Bank and IMF, their cooperation with the UN....all these and many other such issues have taken much energy and have not been resolved. And important as such negotiations are – **they don't feed people**. Nor has a simple decision that any commission must have at least half women at the table been taken.

5. What must we conclude?

The voices of women, of the poor and of the millions of citizens organized in trade unions and all of us organizing against poverty are apparently not as relevant as the banks and the corporates. A joke going around this conference is that if people were cars the bail outs would be coming.....

Our leaders have provided an upside-down bail out package – most of it going to the economic elite, virtually nothing to the 2 billion women, children, the elderly and the socially excluded, at the bottom of the economic pyramid - all of whom are and will be most affected.

Our leaders know the facts on the ground. They can listen to the voices of the women and men most affected. They have the means to choose differently.

To know that a disaster is unfolding, to be partially responsible AND to have the means to solve it – and then not to act urgently: that is the definition of moral negligence.

This is the **moral leadership crisis** we are facing in the world today – and that has not been improved by this UN conference.