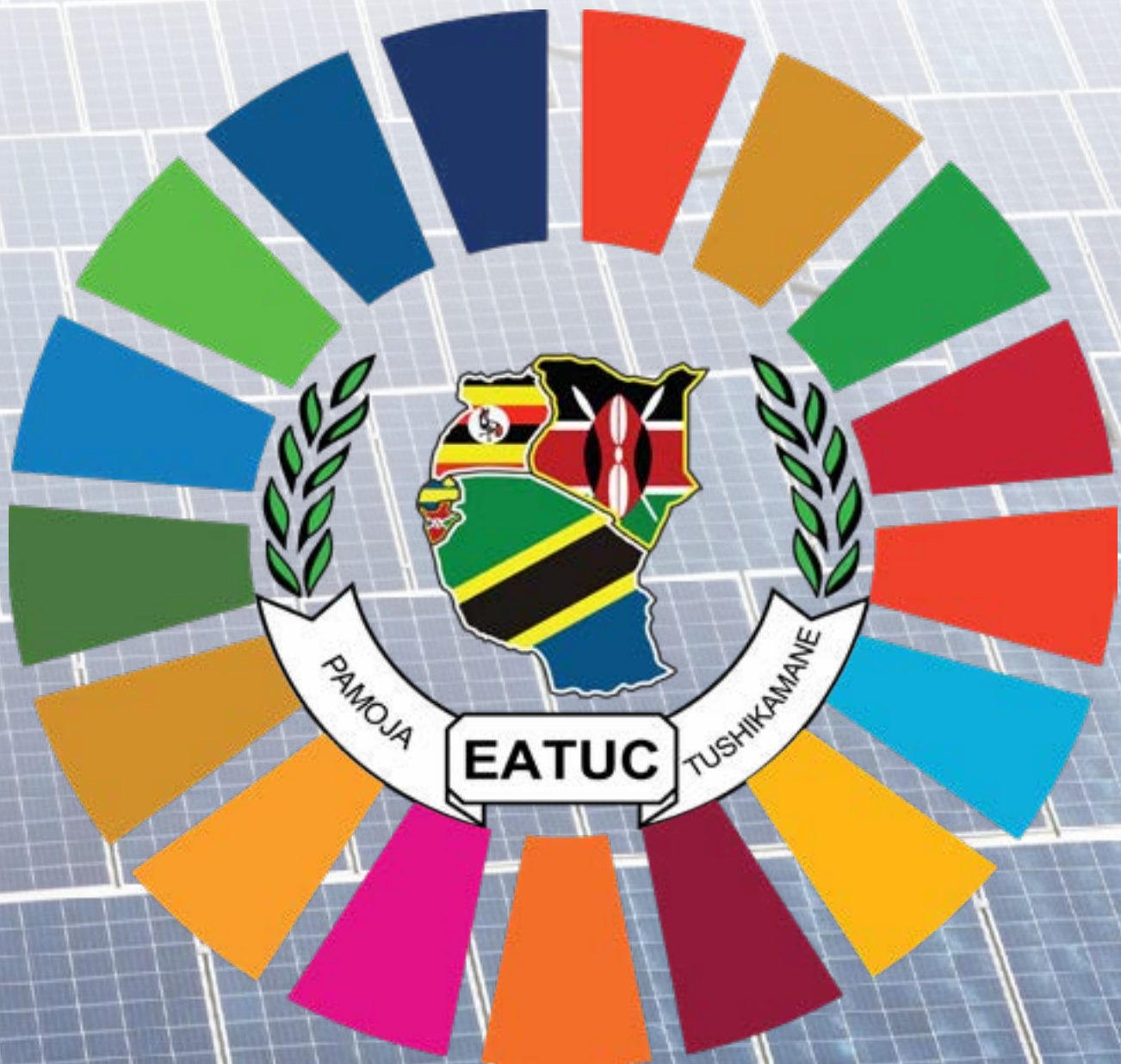




ULANDSEKRETARIATET-DTDA
DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

“Youth Employment through Greening, Entrepreneurship, Digital Transformation, and Just Transition”



**“Youth Employment through Greening, Entrepreneurship,
Digital Transformation, and Just Transition”**

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



INTRODUCTION

The East African Trade Union Confederation recently hosted a transformative two-day conference that emerged as a pivotal event for stakeholders committed to addressing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that youth face across the East African region. The conference attracted an impressive and diverse group of participants including Youth Committee leaders, members of the Committee of Experts from six EATUC Affiliates (ZATUC, COSYBU, NOTU, TUCTA, CESTRAR, COTU-K), and representatives from DTDA and ILO.

This gathering created an invaluable opportunity for networking, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas focused on enhancing the prospects for young people. Throughout the conference, delegates engaged in a rich tapestry of discussions and presentations designed to tackle a wide range of critical issues facing youth today. A significant focal point was youth employment, which sparked in-depth conversations about the barriers young people encounter in the job market, including underemployment and the need for skill development relevant to emerging industries.

The sessions underscored the importance of transitioning to green economies, emphasizing the urgency of incorporating sustainable practices in economic planning, particularly as climate change increasingly affects the region.

One of the standout moments of the conference was the compelling address from a delegate representing Rwanda. This individual passionately articulated the potential of young workers to lead their communities toward a more sustainable, low-carbon future. The delegate’s insights resonated strongly, with other representatives affirming the vital role that youth play in advocating for and implementing practices that support environmental sustainability across various sectors.

In addition, attendees from Uganda showcased a series of innovative strategies they have rolled out to address climate challenges specifically impacting youth. These successful initiatives not only engage young people in environmental stewardship but also provide practical examples of how they can contribute positively to their local ecosystems and economies.

Meanwhile, delegates from Zanzibar emphasized the critical need to equip young people with the tools, resources, and training necessary to thrive in both green and digital economies, recognizing the interconnectedness of these sectors in a rapidly changing job landscape.

The conference reached a strong consensus among participants, who unanimously agreed on the necessity of harnessing the power of technology to enhance youth employment opportunities and stimulate overall economic growth.

They collectively affirmed that this focus should be a cornerstone of future trade union activities, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of young individuals are not merely acknowledged but actively integrated into the decision-making processes that shape their futures.

As the conference drew to a close, attendees left with a renewed commitment to collaborate on actionable strategies aimed at empowering youth and promoting sustainable development across the East African region. This collective resolve marks a significant step forward in advocating for the rights and potential of young people, aiming to create a more inclusive and environmentally responsible economic landscape.



Sis. Rose Omamo,
Central Organisation of Trade Unions - Kenya

Rose Omamo delivered an inspiring speech on behalf of Dr. Francis Atwoli, the Secretary-General of COTU Kenya, during the East African Trade Union Confederation’s (EATUC) Youth Conference. With a profound sense of pride and purpose, she highlighted the significance of the gathering as a collective commitment to tackling the persistent youth employment crisis that plagues East Africa. The need for sustainable, innovative, and inclusive solutions was a central theme of her address.

In her speech, Rose emphasized a critical reality that needs to be universally acknowledged: the youth of East Africa represent not just the future but are also an active part of the present. With approximately 80% of East Africans under the age of 35, the region ranks among the youngest globally, presenting both unique challenges and unprecedented development opportunities.

Understanding the Challenge

- Rose articulated the urgency of the meeting’s deliberations by outlining key statistics and insights:
- Each year, millions of young individuals in East Africa enter the workforce, yet only a small percentage manage to secure formal employment.
 - A significant number of these youth find themselves trapped in low-quality and informal jobs or face outright exclusion from the job market.
 - The situation is exacerbated by environmental degradation, extreme climate events, and gaps in digital access, all of which create additional barriers for young people seeking employment.

She pointed out that these challenges disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups, including rural youth, young women, and other socially marginalized individuals, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion. Nonetheless, she praised the resilience, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit that many young people exhibit despite these adversities.

Leveraging Opportunities: The Way Forward

Rose reminded the audience that the conference served as a clarion call to action for various stakeholders including governments, trade unions, private sector representatives, and development partners to collaboratively transform these challenges into viable opportunities.

The theme of the conference, “Youth Employment through Greening, Entrepreneurship, Digital Transformation, and Just Transformation,” sets a clear pathway for action.

1. Greening the Economy

- The urgency of the climate crisis necessitates immediate action but also opens the door to tremendous opportunities for job creation.
- Rose stressed the importance of investing in renewable energy sources, climate-smart agricultural practices, and eco-friendly industries that could foster sustainable employment for young people.
 - She advocated for trade unions to lead the charge in promoting a just transition, ensuring young workers are actively included in the green economy transformation with access to adequate skills training, decent work conditions, and robust social protections.

2. Fostering Youth Entrepreneurship

Rose underscored the entrepreneurial spirit of East Africa’s youth indicating that between 50% and 65% express a strong desire to start their own businesses. However, various obstacles hinder their progress.

- She called for the strengthening of support systems that enhance financial literacy, provide mentorship opportunities, and facilitate access to market networks for aspiring young entrepreneurs.
- Young entrepreneurs also need to be equipped to capitalize on opportunities generated by green sectors and digital transformation, thereby positioning themselves favourably within the value chain.

3. Driving Digital Transformation

The advent of the digital age offers unparalleled opportunities for employment, innovation, and entrepreneurship. In East Africa, digital startups have begun attracting significant investments, creating jobs, and revolutionizing industries such as healthcare and agriculture.

- Rose highlighted the necessity of addressing existing barriers, particularly the disparities in access to technology and education, which must be mitigated to ensure inclusive and equitable digital adoption.
- Investment in digital literacy and skills development is crucial, enabling youth to thrive in emergent gig economies and navigate the expanding realm of online workspaces.

The Role of Trade Unions

- Trade unions are positioned as vital players in catalyzing this transformation. At EATUC, there is a vision for young trade unionists to be at the forefront of these endeavors, advocating for:
- Policies that specifically target the creation of green and decent jobs, with particular attention to the needs of women and rural youth.
- A fair and inclusive approach to the transition that safeguards workers’ rights and interests.
- Opportunities for youth to have a substantial voice in the decision-making processes that shape economic and societal landscapes.

In conclusion, Rose urged the EATUC youth to prioritize leadership training, capacity building, and organized action. She strongly encouraged young trade unionists to take the reins in driving the necessary changes to create a more equitable and prosperous future for all.





Bro. Mwaiko Stephano,
Executive Secretary, East African Trade Union Confederation

In his opening speech, **Stephen** emphasized that the conference was organized to address the challenging circumstances faced by workers and their organizations, particularly focusing on youth issues. The dual impact of climate change and ongoing international conflicts has led to widespread human suffering and deepening divisions, significantly reversing the progress made towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

The rising interest rates and potential debt distress further complicate matters for East African states, which are already vulnerable to climate change. These challenges make it nearly impossible for them to tackle pressing socio-economic issues, including high living costs, fiscal strain, and migration, which in turn weaken international solidarity.

Most critically, the world is currently experiencing severe and escalating impacts of climate change. These effects are particularly acute for working individuals, especially in developing countries, who, despite contributing minimally to global emissions, find themselves at the forefront of environmental vulnerability.

The transition away from carbon-based, fossil-fuel-dependent economies places pressure on the international trade union movement to protect workers from being left behind and to alleviate structural impacts that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups.

Paradoxically, trade union members and their jobs are at the forefront of the green transition. Skilled technicians, electricians, blacksmiths, and others contribute to the development and implementation of low-emission technologies and industries that are integral to this transition.

Mr Mwaiko highlighted that trade unions face numerous challenges and organizational dilemmas, including job security and retention, violations of labour rights, retrenchments, inadequate social protection and equality, skills mismatch, a lack of climate finance, the presence of polluting companies, disruptive technologies, and rising poverty and informal economies due to a global green transition.





These challenges underscore the urgent need for innovative solutions and sustainable strategies that can help workers and businesses adapt to changing circumstances, while also mitigating the negative impacts of conflict and climate change on the workforce.

Trade unions do not have to choose between supporting green transitions and ensuring job security; rather, they can adopt various strategies. They utilize a mix of reactive and defensive approaches to protect the current status quo, while also progressively supporting a just transition with minimal costs to their members.



This pictorial report aims to provide practical guidance to trade union leaders and their representatives in developing countries on integrating environmental sustainability and a just transition into their daily work. The guide is designed to serve as a learning platform, encouraging readers to exchange experiences and explore different approaches and trade-offs when navigating the dynamics within existing workers' organizations, as well as when negotiating with employers and governments especially regarding energy transitions.



Additionally, the report draws on evidence-based cases from various levels across developing countries and includes recommendations from different trade unions, illustrating how to address obstacles in relationships with employers, governments, climate change NGOs, and communities. Will the trade union movement adopt new forms of activism and organizing, and will it need to form innovative alliances in the future?

We hope this pictorial report will enhance the technical knowledge and skills of young workers, union leaders, educators, organizers, and green labour representatives. Our goal is to foster a renewed commitment to advocating for a just transition towards lower carbon-based labour markets and national economies. In line with this ambition, this pictorial report is published to share knowledge and experiences that will strengthen the trade union movement's membership base and amplify its voice in society, thereby influencing policymaking towards a just and sustainable transition.



Ms Lene OLSEN, Senior Programme and Operations Specialist ILO ACTRAV-Geneva, Switzerland

In her Zoom presentation, Lene Olsen explained that climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our time. The efforts to mitigate carbon emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change already have far-reaching implications for our daily lives and the world of work.

The consequences of climate change, such as rising temperatures, flooding, and extreme weather events, are already being felt worldwide. While mitigation policies are mainly directed at industrialized countries (as they have the most considerable emissions), developing nations are also concerned about the impact of such policies on their economies.

Considering national circumstances, it is essential to have common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Most developing countries have limited economic diversification and are heavily dependent on few industries, making them vulnerable to economic, pandemic, and climate shocks.

Rapid population increase, fiscal deficits, and limited innovation capacities also pose further challenges for these countries. The economic decisions of developing countries are influenced by external factors beyond their control, making them more susceptible to economic uncertainties and crises.

In 2013, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted a significant resolution aimed at promoting sustainable development, decent work, and green jobs. This resolution established the foundation for the ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for everyone, as well as the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. Both the ILO Guidelines and the Paris Agreement emphasize the importance of a just transition and the creation of decent work as essential elements in addressing climate change.



She further elaborated that, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) and the Green Initiative were established to support a fair, just, and equitable transition. Efforts are underway to ensure that the transition to sustainable economies does not leave workers behind. Although progress has been made toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, the scale of current efforts is insufficient.

In her online presentation, Lane noted that at the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit, 46 countries made significant commitments to prioritize jobs within ambitious climate action initiatives and promote a just transition. To foster concrete measures, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative, spearheaded by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Recently, during the ILO conference in 2023, a tripartite resolution was agreed upon concerning a just transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.

These initiatives bring together governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations, international institutions, academia, and civil society to drive change. It is crucial to recognize that the transition to decarbonization affects numerous industries and occupations, including manufacturing, mining, transport, agriculture, construction, electricity, air conditioning, waste management, and more.

As this shift occurs, some jobs may disappear, others might be restructured, and entirely new opportunities may emerge. Therefore, this transition must be managed in a just and socially responsible manner, focusing on protecting workers’ rights and ensuring that those impacted by these changes receive adequate support.

She particularly commended the women’s electric bicycle riders in Kathmandu and highlighted the negative impacts of climate change on the country. She pointed out that air pollution in the bowl-shaped Kathmandu Valley, caused by both human activities and geographical factors, poses serious health risks, especially for vulnerable groups.

She recalled that Kathmandu is the fastest-growing city in Southeast Asia, with a population of 1.5 million as of 2022, and is one of the most ancient cities in the world. Alarming, air pollution and carbon footprints in Kathmandu are nine times higher than the international guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO).

In response to these challenges, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) is collaborating with the municipality of Kathmandu to introduce green transportation initiatives aimed at reducing significant CO₂ emissions in the city and country. This pollution has had severe consequences for Nepal’s glaciers, biodiversity, and overall economy.

In recent years, Kathmandu has adapted to climate changes by introducing a clean and climate-resilient transport infrastructure, which prominently features electric tricycles (tuk-tuks) powered by hydropower from the region’s 6,000 rivers and waterfalls. To reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels, a team of technicians and entrepreneurs has innovated environmentally friendly tricycles to replace the old ‘Bikram and Bajaj Tempo,’ which were identified as major sources of unsustainable pollution. The government has since banned these vehicles and replaced them with the Electric ‘Safa Tempo,’ which operates on rechargeable batteries, contributing to reduced CO₂ emissions.

A just transition must be managed fairly and equitably for all involved. This includes providing social protection for millions of workers who may lose their jobs and promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining agreements with employers as essential tools for collaboration. One critical aspect of this transition is upskilling and reskilling workers to help them thrive in low-emission industries and sectors.





Ms. Chiku Semfuko,
International Labour Organization - Tanzania

Chiku Semfuko facilitated an insightful panel discussion that brought together youth representatives from six EATUC Affiliates. The focus of this engagement was on climate action aimed at achieving a just transition for the region a concept that emphasizes not only environmental sustainability but also social equity.

During the discussion, participants delved into the critical steps needed to combat climate change effectively. They emphasized the necessity of creating equitable strategies that support vulnerable communities, ensuring that everyone has access to the benefits of a sustainable future. Topics included innovative methods to reduce carbon emissions and the importance of transitioning towards a low-carbon economy, which would serve to protect the environment while promoting economic growth.

Chiku emphasized Rwanda as a remarkable case in the global battle against environmental degradation. The country has made significant strides by completely banning plastic carrier bags, a move that reflects its commitment to sustainability. This bold initiative not only showcases Rwanda's proactive approach to reducing plastic waste but also serves as a model for other nations aiming to combat pollution and protect their natural habitats. By promoting alternatives to plastic, Rwanda has taken a leading role in fostering environmental awareness and encouraging eco-friendly practices among its citizens.

She encouraged other countries in the region to adopt similar policies and learn from Rwanda's proactive approach to environmental management. This example served as a pivotal point in the discussion, with many participants expressing a desire to explore and implement similar initiatives in their respective nations.

The participants unanimously agreed that tree planting is a crucial initial step toward restoring and conserving their ailing ecosystems. This commitment to afforestation aligns with their shared vision for a healthier environment and a brighter future for generations to come.

Chiku passionately urged the youth present at the panel to become climate ambassadors in their communities, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in these efforts. She called on them to ensure that no one is left behind in the journey toward environmental justice and sustainability, highlighting that the youth hold the power to influence change and drive collective action for a better planet.

She stressed ecosystems' vital role in sustaining various services essential for employment across diverse sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and mining. A healthy ecosystem not only supports these industries but also ensures the survival of countless species. When ecosystems are damaged whether through pollution, deforestation, overfishing, or other forms of human-induced catastrophe there are far-reaching consequences.

The disruption of natural processes can lead to diminished resources and livelihoods for those who depend on these sectors. Furthermore, the impact extends beyond just human workers; it jeopardizes the survival of numerous innocent creatures that share these environments, ultimately altering the balance of nature and threatening biodiversity. Thus, the interconnectedness of life within these ecosystems highlights the importance of their preservation for both our well-being and that of the planet.

She further talked about job creation and security. She emphasized that employment in a transition towards low-carbon economies is both a challenge and an opportunity for trade unions. It is a challenge because job security is the "raison d'être" of trade unions, whose main purpose is to defend and protect their members from job losses and indecent and unhealthy work.

It is an opportunity because a green transition if it is just and fair has employment and decent work potential under the right regulatory frameworks.

A just transition that includes decent employment options is gaining traction among policymakers and investors worldwide. However, challenges and dilemmas arise in the varying circumstances of developing countries. Job insecurity remains a significant concern for many trade union leaders, particularly in high-carbon industries within the energy sector, especially those associated with coal, oil, and gas.

Trade union leaders often have to balance their members’ interests in job transitions with the need for better unemployment insurance and other compensation measures. Others advocate for enhanced competitiveness and productivity (and employment) as long as these efforts are socially responsible, rather than resulting in a race to the bottom.

Chiku provided an example from the ILO’s perspective, illustrating that employment is impacted in four ways as climate policies guide economies towards greater sustainability.

1. job creation,
2. job substitution,
3. job elimination, and
4. job transformation.

She helped the youth understand that ILO and green jobs are decent positions that contribute to environmental preservation. These jobs can be found in both traditional sectors, such as manufacturing and construction, and in emerging green sectors, like renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Green jobs span all sectors and industries, encompassing all workers. This includes those in emerging industries such as renewable energy, electric vehicles, and power systems, as well as in other sectors that are becoming more environmentally friendly due to energy efficiency, digitalization, and changing consumer preferences, such as hotels.

Chiku helped the youth understand that green jobs enhance the efficiency of energy and raw materials, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution, protect and restore ecosystems, and promote adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

However, a contentious issue in the international climate change debates within developing countries is the extent to which the transition from high-carbon to low-carbon industries and services affects employment.

This includes concerns about job losses, job creation, job adaptation, job substitution, and the relocation of jobs to various sectors of the economy, such as blue, white, green, or brown industries.



Edgar Pajobo thoroughly discussed nearly all topics during the meeting and shared his extensive knowledge, particularly on job forecasting. He informed the delegates that recent global projections indicate a net increase in employment across various sectors. This increase directly affects renewable energy, industry, digital and disruptive technologies (including electricity), transport, marine industries, and gig platform economies. Additionally, there will be indirect net effects in supplying sectors.

He gave an example of the International Labour Organization (ILO) projects that by 2030, 100 million jobs will be created, while 78 million jobs may be destroyed, redefined, or relocated. The ILO also emphasizes that the green transition has the potential to generate millions of jobs, provided that significant investments are made in re-skilling and up-skilling workers.

However, the international trade union movement expresses concerns regarding the disparities in the transition towards climate neutrality, especially in climate-vulnerable and developing countries. These disparities vary across different sectors and depend on the framework conditions affecting competitiveness and productivity. Vulnerable groups are particularly affected by issues such as skills mismatch, high energy prices, low incomes, and illiteracy.


In an overview of the renewable energy employment landscape for 2022, conducted by the ILO and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), it was found that global jobs in renewable energy have nearly doubled over the past decade. Nevertheless, there is a concentration of these jobs in a few countries, leading to an uneven geographical distribution. For example, over 40% of the 13.7 million renewable energy jobs are located in China, 14% in Europe, and only 2.3% in Africa.

Projections of both direct and indirect employment effects in various sectors and developing countries are crucial for trade unions. This allows them to anticipate changes in employment patterns, particularly for global trade union organization's like IndustriALL Global Union, the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), and Public Services International (PSI). Global Union Federations (GUFs) can create extensive forecasts that span borders, addressing future job opportunities and skills requirements—both directly and within national and global value chains—while also estimating the number of jobs that may be lost.

To enhance the accuracy of these projections and create a level playing field, some global and sectoral unions work together with employers. This collaboration focuses on jointly forecasting employment trends in both high- and low-carbon sectors, ensuring that there are shared interests and equitable conditions across industries. He also discussed various employment strategies with the youth. He emphasized that job security and basic livelihood issues remain among the primary objectives of trade union members. Trade unions adopt strategies to ensure job security while promoting a just transition.

For example, the Transport Workers Union of Kenya seeks to protect existing jobs during the transition from petroleum-fueled Matatu-taxis to new public e-buses in the bus rapid transit corridors (BRT) introduced in Nairobi in 2022. He made it clear that trade union centres addressing new green jobs in the informal economy use different strategies to promote these 'green' jobs.

The overall message from these cases is that job security, employment, and livelihoods are the top priorities. Trade union leaders from various centres and sectoral unions employ different employment strategies, especially in contexts where union membership is sharply declining. Union leaders work to protect their members from daily violations of fundamental labour rights, such as unfair dismissals and harassment, and from precarious work, often with limited resources or capacity to conduct job forecasts.

A photograph of Mr. Pajob Edgar, a man with a beard and short dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. In the background, a large white wind turbine stands on a grassy field under a clear sky.

Mr. Pajob Edgar,
National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU) - Uganda



During her engaging presentation, **Rebecca Okello** took the time to lay a solid foundation by helping the participants grasp the concept of climate change. She began by defining climate change as the long-term shift in temperature and weather patterns of the Earth, which significantly results from human activities, notably the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas, as well as large-scale deforestation.

This disruption in the natural balance leads to a range of severe consequences, including extreme weather events like hurricanes and droughts, rising sea levels that threaten coastal communities, and detrimental impacts on wildlife, ecosystems, and human health. Additionally, she mentioned that climate change can also arise from natural phenomena, including geological events like earthquakes and landslides, although the current trend is largely influenced by human actions.

In her in-depth exploration of the greenhouse effect, Rebecca effectively illustrated the role of greenhouse gases in regulating the Earth's temperature. She explained that certain gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, play a crucial part in trapping heat within the Earth's atmosphere, which is necessary for maintaining a habitable climate.

However, she emphasized that the excessive emissions of these gases due to industrial processes, agriculture, and waste management are overwhelming the natural systems designed to regulate them, leading to an accelerated process known as global warming. By sharing these insights, Rebecca not only educated the participants on the scientific basis of climate change but also underscored the urgent need for action to mitigate its effects and protect our planet for future generations.

She emphasized that the effects of greenhouse gases on the planet are stated below:

- Rising temperatures
- Melting ice and rising seas
- Extreme weather events
- Loss of habitats and ecosystems
- Threats to human health and resources

In her quest to find a solution to the pressing environmental issues, she pondered a fundamental question:

What can we actually do?

She highlighted the critical need to save energy by implementing more efficient practices in our daily lives, such as using energy-saving appliances and reducing unnecessary electricity consumption. Additionally, she urged for a concerted effort to minimize waste through recycling and composting, which can significantly lower the burden on landfills.

Moreover, she stressed the importance of planting trees as a simple yet impactful way to combat climate change, improve air quality, and enhance biodiversity. This act not only sequesters carbon dioxide but also provides habitats for countless species.

Most importantly, she recognized that education plays a pivotal role in driving change. She advocated for spreading awareness about environmental conservation, encouraging individuals and communities to take action and inspire others to do the same. By fostering a culture of responsibility and stewardship for our planet, she believed that even the smallest individual actions could collectively lead to profound transformations in our environment.




Ms. Rebecca Okello,
Central Organisation of Trade Unions - Kenya

As Rebecca concluded her presentation, she focused on four key topics regarding how East African youth can effectively balance entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and climate action to address the employment crisis in the region:

1. **Skills Development:** What role do leadership training and capacity-building programs play in preparing young trade unionists to advocate for green and decent jobs?
2. **Challenges and Opportunities:** What are the major challenges young workers face when transitioning to green jobs, and how can trade unions help overcome these obstacles?
3. **Digital Transformation:** How can digital transformation and technology adoption be utilized to enhance youth participation in green economies and entrepreneurship?
4. **Impact Measurement:** How will the outcomes of this youth conference, such as increased awareness of green jobs and organizing strategies, be measured to ensure long-term benefits for young trade unionists?



A woman wearing a red hijab with a leopard print headband is speaking into a black microphone. She is standing in front of several large blue solar panels. In the background, a man in a grey shirt is kneeling and working on the solar panels. The setting appears to be an outdoor area with dry, reddish-brown soil and some green bushes in the distance.

In her insightful presentation, Launi provided an in-depth analysis of the dynamic landscape shaping East Africa today. She emphasized that youth empowerment emerges as a crucial cornerstone for both social and economic development in the region. With around 60% of East Africa's population being under the age of 35, there exists a tremendous reservoir of potential for innovation, creativity, and transformative change.

Launi articulated that unlocking this potential is not merely a matter of recognition; it necessitates the implementation of strategic initiatives designed to leverage technology as a fundamental catalyst for growth. These initiatives should aim not only to enhance access to digital tools but also to stimulate entrepreneurial activities among the youth, fostering an environment ripe for innovation.

Over the decades, the concept of youth empowerment in East Africa has undergone notable evolution. Initially, efforts in this arena were centred around social initiatives that lacked structure and sustainable frameworks. However, there has been a significant shift towards establishing well-organized programs that are increasingly supported by technology and innovative practices. This evolution reflects a growing understanding of the need for a more holistic approach to youth development.

Despite these advancements, Launi cautioned that the path toward meaningful youth empowerment is fraught with challenges. The region continues to grapple with issues such as a pervasive skills mismatch, where the competencies of the youth do not align with the demands of the labour market. Additionally, many young people face barriers to accessing quality education, sufficient employment opportunities, and vital resources needed for their personal and professional development.

Addressing these challenges is essential for fully harnessing the potential of East Africa's youth and fostering sustainable progress in the region.

Ms. Launi Laila Makame
ZATUC Zanzibar



Mr. Juma Baraka Issa
TUCTA Tanzania



Baraka's presentation addressed the critical issue of skills shortages in East Africa and other developing countries, emphasizing the need for trade unions to develop strategies for a just transition.

He highlighted the importance of effectively utilizing technical and vocational education, along with upskilling and reskilling initiatives, to create job opportunities for low and medium-skilled workers.



The reality, however, is that skills shortages significantly hinder the transition to greener, climate-friendly technologies and the creation of new jobs in these regions.

This challenge also extends to the adoption of new materials, clean processes, and innovative technologies.

Compounding the issue is the widespread negative perception of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET).



Many national TVET systems suffer from inadequate funding, lack robust academic structures, and often operate through outdated government-managed training institutions.

Additionally, sporadic corporate on-the-job training programs tend to cater only to employees within the formal economy, leaving many potential apprentices without development opportunities.

Diane from CESTRAR-Rwanda made it clear that Climate change represents a multifaceted crisis that goes beyond environmental concerns; it is a profound challenge that affects our future prosperity, public health, and the well-being of our communities. As emerging leaders within the labour movement, she repeated that we possess a unique opportunity and responsibility to catalyze meaningful change. By raising awareness about the urgent realities of climate change, we can educate our peers and the broader public on its extensive effects, from extreme weather events to economic instability.

We must also adopt sustainable practices within our organizations and workplaces, demonstrating a commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and promoting eco-friendly initiatives. This includes advocating for policies that support renewable energy, sustainable transportation, and green jobs that not only protect our environment but also foster economic growth. Moreover, we must demand action from policymakers and industry leaders. By mobilizing our collective voices, we can hold them accountable for their role in combating climate change and push for legislation that prioritizes environmental justice and equitable access to resources.

Together, as young trade unionists united for a common cause, we can protect our planet while simultaneously working towards the realization of a green economy that benefits both workers and the environment. Our efforts can lay the groundwork for a sustainable future and create a legacy of responsibility and resilience for generations to come. Diane discussed the Lack of Relevant Skills and Education she, emphasized that one of the most pressing challenges facing youth employment in East Africa is the significant mismatch between the skills of young people and the competencies that employers seek.

Many educational institutions in the region often fail to equip students with practical training and curricula tailored to the job market's current demands. This disconnect leads to an ill-prepared workforce for the available job opportunities, especially in critical sectors such as technology, agriculture, and manufacturing.

In the technology sector, for instance, while there is a growing demand for skilled workers proficient in coding, software development, and digital marketing, many graduates emerge without hands-on experience or knowledge of the latest tools and technologies. Similarly, in agriculture, which remains a cornerstone of many East African economies, young people often lack access to modern farming techniques or knowledge about sustainable practices, limiting their employability.

In manufacturing, the situation is no different; industries frequently require workers who have specialized skills, such as machine operation or quality control, which are often not covered in traditional educational programs. As a result, employers face difficulties in finding qualified candidates, and young people are left struggling to find jobs that match their aspirations and potential. Bridging this skill gap is essential for enhancing youth employment prospects and fostering economic growth in the region. To overcome these barriers, she emphasized the need for a concerted effort to reform educational systems.

This can include:

- *Collaborating with industry partners to develop curricula that align with current job market demands.*
- *Vocational training programs should increase access to practical skills for young people.*
- *Enhance internships and apprenticeships by fostering collaborations between educational institutions and businesses to provide students with practical experience.*
- *Experience is essential in all activities. The knowledge or skills acquired through involvement in or exposure to events, activities, or practices serve as the driving force behind our economies and livelihoods.*

Ms. Izabayo Diane
CESTRAR Rwanda



Mr. Olowo Gideon,
National Organization of Trade Unions - Uganda

Gideon from Uganda shared with participants the limited access to capital. He emphasized how many young entrepreneurs face significant challenges in securing the financial resources necessary to launch their businesses. One of the primary hurdles is the perception held by traditional banks and financial institutions, which often categorize young individuals as high-risk borrowers.

This classification arises primarily from two key factors:

- Their limited credit history and
- The absence of substantial collateral.

Young entrepreneurs often face distinct challenges when it comes to securing financing for their ventures. One significant hurdle is their limited credit history; since they are typically early in their careers, they have not had sufficient time to establish a strong credit profile that demonstrates their ability to manage and repay debt responsibly. This lack of a robust credit history can make traditional lending institutions wary.

In addition to insufficient credit histories, many young entrepreneurs may also be without valuable assets that could help secure loans. Unlike more established business owners who might own property, vehicles, or substantial savings, young entrepreneurs often have limited resources to leverage for borrowing purposes. This lack of collateral heightens the perceived risk for banks and financial institutions, which in turn may lead them to hesitate when considering loan applications from this demographic.

Consequently, these factors combine to create a challenging financial landscape for aspiring business owners. With traditional avenues for financing being frequently inaccessible, many young entrepreneurs may find themselves exploring alternative funding sources. Options such as venture capital or crowdfunding have become increasingly popular; however, these routes often come with their own set of challenges.

For instance, venture capital can be highly competitive, with many start-ups vying for the attention of investors, while crowdfunding platforms may require significant marketing efforts and engagement to attract potential backers. Ultimately, the interplay of limited credit history, lack of collateral, and alternative funding barriers presents a tough environment for young individuals looking to launch their businesses.

To overcome these barriers, it is crucial to enhance access to capital, and various strategies can be employed.

- Microfinance institutions that focus on youth can help them obtain small loans with less strict requirements.
- Government grants and subsidies can be specifically aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs.
- Financial literacy programs can empower young people to manage funds effectively.

Grace Kanyange, the youth representative from Burundi, delivered a heartfelt address on the pressing issues of social norms and gender inequality that persist within East African societies. She articulated how deeply entrenched cultural beliefs and practices often act as formidable barriers to employment opportunities for various demographic groups, with women bearing the brunt of these limitations.

Kanyange highlighted that in many communities, traditional expectations dictate the roles women should occupy, frequently relegating them to domestic responsibilities and discouraging them from pursuing higher education or career aspirations. This systemic bias not only restricts women's access to educational resources but also limits their ability to build professional networks that are crucial for career advancement.

As a consequence, women find themselves trapped in a cycle of gender discrimination that stifles their potential for personal and economic development. The ramifications extend beyond individual lives; the underutilization of women's talents and skills significantly hinders the overall progress and prosperity of their communities. Kanyange's powerful remarks underscored the urgent need for societal transformation to dismantle these barriers, thereby fostering an environment where both men and women can thrive equally in the workforce.

She made it clear that to overcome these barriers, we must challenge the social norms that hinder employment by:

- Campaigns that promote gender equality in education and employment that can change societal perceptions.
- Strengthening laws against discrimination in hiring practices that will foster a more equitable job market and lastly.
- Creating mentorship programs for young women that can enhance their involvement in various fields.

During her discussion, she highlighted the persistent inadequacies in the current labor market information system. Many young people, she noted, often find themselves at a disadvantage because they lack crucial access to comprehensive information regarding available job opportunities and various potential career paths. This gap in knowledge is primarily due to the insufficient dissemination and accessibility of labor market data, which hinders their ability to make informed career choices. Kanyange stressed the urgent need for young individuals to unite with fellow trade unionists to enhance and reform labor market information systems. She believes that fostering collaboration within these networks is vital in order to address the barriers that young people face.

To effectively achieve this goal, she outlined several key measures that must be implemented: By implementing a comprehensive set of measures, Kanyange is confident that young people will acquire the necessary insights to effectively navigate their career journeys and make informed decisions about their futures.

- **Job Portals:** The development of specialized online job portals is crucial for connecting young job seekers with potential employers. These platforms can serve as dedicated spaces where businesses can post job vacancies specifically aimed at youth, making it easier for young people to find internships, entry-level positions, and other opportunities that match their skills and aspirations. By tailoring the job listings to various industries and career paths, these portals can help bridge the gap between education and employment.



Ms. Kanyange Grace,
COSYBU - Burundi

- **Career Counseling Services:** It is essential for schools to establish robust career counseling services that provide students with guidance on a wide range of career options. These services should not only inform students about different professions but also educate them on the skills and qualifications required in the current job market. By incorporating data on market trends and in-demand careers, counselors can help students make choices that align with their interests and the realities of today’s economic landscape.
- **Collaboration with Employers:** Actively engaging employers in meaningful discussions about their future workforce needs is vital for aligning educational outcomes with labor market demands. Schools, colleges, and universities should collaborate with local businesses to identify the skills and competencies that are most sought after in their respective industries. Such partnerships can lead to curriculum improvements and the development of training programs that equip students with the knowledge and experience needed to thrive in their chosen fields.

Through these initiatives, Kanyange envisions a future where youth are better prepared to embark on successful careers, empowered by the tools and knowledge necessary to make strategic decisions about their professional lives.





Mr. Lyimo Allen Michael,
TUCTA - Tanzania

Allen Lyimo, the youth representative from Tanzania, addressed the pressing issues of economic instability and inadequate job creation that are impacting the youth in East Africa. He emphasized that these challenges are not isolated but rather widespread across the region, creating significant barriers for young people seeking employment.

In his presentation, Lyimo elaborated on several critical factors contributing to this economic turmoil. He pointed out that political instability in various countries often leads to uncertainty, discouraging investment and hindering economic growth. Additionally, rising inflation further compounds the problem, eroding purchasing power and making it difficult for families to make ends meet.

Moreover, Lyimo highlighted the region's heavy reliance on subsistence agriculture, which limits the creation of formal job opportunities. Many young people grow up in rural areas where agricultural work is the primary means of livelihood, yet this sector often offers little promise for upward mobility or stable employment.

To tackle these significant challenges, he urged participants to recognize the importance of addressing economic instability as a foundational step. Lyimo suggested that a multifaceted approach is necessary, incorporating policy reforms that encourage job creation, investment in education and vocational training, and the promotion of entrepreneurship among young people. He concluded with a call to action for stakeholders across East Africa to collaborate in fostering a more conducive environment for youth employment and economic development.

Multi-faceted approaches will support the transition effectively by doing the following:

- Investment in Infrastructure: Enhancing infrastructure can attract foreign investment and stimulate local economies.
- Support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can be enhanced by creating a favourable environment through tax incentives or reduced regulatory burdens, leading to increased job creation.
- Diversifying the economy by encouraging sectors like tourism, technology, and renewable energy can create new job opportunities.





Ms. Ruth Khakame,
Central Organisation of Trade Unions - Kenya

Ruth Khakame delivered an impactful presentation on the essential role of technology in creating job opportunities, particularly for young people. She emphasized that before they can tap into these opportunities, it is crucial for youth to achieve a level of digital literacy. This process involves not just basic familiarity with computers, but also the skillful use of the internet and various digital platforms.

Digital literacy encompasses a broad range of skills, including the ability to navigate different types of software, conduct effective online research, understand cybersecurity practices, and utilize social media for professional networking. By mastering these competencies, young individuals can access an array of online resources that offer valuable information and support in their job search efforts.

Moreover, digital literacy enables participation in virtual training programs, webinars, and online courses, providing opportunities for skill enhancement and professional development that were previously unavailable to many due to geographic limitations. As a result, young people can apply for jobs that might have been out of reach due to distance or lack of access to local opportunities.

Ultimately, achieving digital literacy serves as a vital stepping stone, opening the door to a world where geographic location no longer limits employment possibilities, and where young people can compete on a more equal footing in the global job market.

She delved deeper into the significant obstacles facing the digital economy in East Africa, highlighting a series of intertwined challenges that need to be addressed. First, there is the pervasive issue of limited internet access and inadequate infrastructure, which restricts connectivity in many regions. This is compounded by the high cost of data, making it financially burdensome for individuals and small businesses to access online services.

Moreover, there is an evident disparity in digital literacy levels across the continent. This uneven access to education and training in digital skills prevents many from fully participating in the digital economy. The absence of robust regulatory frameworks further complicates the landscape, as unclear policies can deter investment and innovation.

Additionally, the lack of sufficient cybersecurity measures poses a significant risk to users and companies alike, exposing them to threats that can undermine trust in digital platforms. The digital divide remains pronounced, particularly between urban and rural areas, where rural populations often have limited opportunities to engage in e-commerce or access digital services.

Power instability is another critical factor that disrupts the reliability and growth of digital infrastructure, often leading to service interruptions. Finally, logistical challenges, including difficulties in transportation and supply chain management, hinder the effective execution of digital commerce, making it harder for businesses to thrive in a highly competitive and globalized market. Together, these issues significantly impede the realization of the full potential of the digital economy across East Africa.

Bariki Agesa stands out as a passionate young activist dedicated to addressing the pressing issue of climate change. He asserts that climate change is primarily driven by human activities, such as the combustion of fossil fuels for energy, extensive deforestation for agriculture and urban development, and other practices that release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. As a result of these actions, global temperatures continue to rise, which in turn contributes to a cascade of serious consequences including extreme weather events, increased sea levels, and widespread environmental degradation.


For youth under the age of 16, the implications of these changes are particularly alarming. They face a future that could be significantly compromised by the effects of climate change, which threatens not only their education and health but also their livelihoods. The education system, for instance, may be disrupted by climate-related disasters, while health issues may arise from pollution and heat waves. Their opportunities for stable employment may also diminish as industries struggle to adapt to a changing climate.

Bariki emphasizes that if society had recognized the dangers of climate change and taken decisive action earlier, many of the crises we face today such as food shortages, displacement of communities, and heightened conflict over resources might have been preventable.

To combat these issues, the Paris Agreement has emerged as a beacon of hope, aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. However, the success of this agreement hinges on the involvement of informed and financially literate individuals. Bariki believes that by understanding concepts like sustainable investments and green innovations, young people can effectively advocate for environmentally friendly policies and solutions.

To prepare for a resilient, climate-conscious future, youth must become knowledgeable about the practices that promote sustainability. This includes not only understanding how to invest in eco-friendly technologies but also championing the importance of renewable energy sources, conservation efforts, and policies that prioritize environmental protection. Through engagement and education, young activists like Bariki can inspire their peers to take meaningful actions toward creating a more sustainable world.

Bariki Agesa Mwiruki,
A young Climate change activist - Kenya

A woman in a blue shirt is working with a multimeter, holding it with both hands. She is looking down at the device. In the background, there are shelves with various items and a window with blinds.

Kiiza Kakolwa was so happy at the end of the two-day conference that a resolution was passed emphasising that success in the green economy goes beyond just environmental responsibility. She said that a just transition required a unique combination of technical expertise, entrepreneurial spirit, and strong interpersonal skills. Kakolwa noted that young entrepreneurs who wish to make an impact in this field should master fundamental skills that are essential for the needed positive change at the workplace.

She detailed the following key skills essential for flourishing in the green economy:

Sustainability Knowledge

A profound understanding of environmental challenges, such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, paired with comprehensive knowledge of sustainable practices that mitigate these issues. An awareness of the principles of the circular economy, which promotes the reuse and recycling of resources, alongside familiarity with renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower, as well as strategies for enhancing resource efficiency.

Innovation and Problem-Solving

The ability to think creatively and approach environmental problems with innovative solutions that break away from traditional methods. The capacity to conceptualise and design eco-friendly products or services that not only have a minimal environmental footprint but also fulfil market demands and customer needs.

Technical Skills

Expertise in emerging green technologies, which may include solar energy systems, advanced waste management solutions, and sustainable agricultural practices that enhance food security. A strong proficiency in data analysis tools that allow for effective monitoring and evaluation of environmental impacts, enabling informed decision-making.

Business Acumen

Competence in financial management, including skills in budgeting, forecasting, and obtaining green funding, essential for maintaining financial health and ensuring project sustainability. Strategic planning abilities aimed at identifying and capitalising on market opportunities within the burgeoning green economy, allowing for growth and innovation.

Policy and Regulatory Awareness

A solid understanding of the complex landscape of environmental laws and policies, including international frameworks such as carbon trading systems and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Skills necessary to navigate the landscape of government incentives and green certifications that can provide additional support and legitimacy to sustainable ventures.

Networking and Collaboration

The capability to cultivate meaningful partnerships with organisations that share similar visions, stakeholders in the community, and policymakers can enhance collaboration and amplify impact. Engaging effectively with local communities to co-create inclusive and sustainable solutions, ensuring that initiatives are socially equitable and widely supported.

Ms. Kiiza Kakolwa,
Danish Trade Union Development Agency - Tanzania



Resilience and Adaptability

A strong capacity to face challenges head-on, whether they arise from shifting policies, financial uncertainties, or unpredictable market dynamics, demonstrates adaptability and perseverance. An openness to pivot strategies as new trends and insights emerge within the green economy, allowing for continuous growth and relevance.

Marketing and Communication

Skills to articulate the unique value propositions of green products and services clearly and persuasively, ensuring that the message resonates with consumers. Advocacy for sustainability that inspires individuals and communities to adopt sustainable practices and fosters greater awareness of environmental issues.

Leadership and Ethical Responsibility

A steadfast commitment to ethical practices and social responsibility, ensuring that all business operations reflect a dedication to sustainability and community welfare. The ability to inspire and lead teams towards achieving sustainable goals, fostering a culture of innovation and accountability.

Digital and Technological Literacy

She made it clear that they must be competent in utilising digital platforms to enhance outreach efforts and scale green innovations globally, effectively leveraging technology for maximum impact. Harnessing cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), or blockchain to develop sustainable business solutions that drive efficiency and transparency. By cultivating and integrating these diverse skills, young entrepreneurs will be well-equipped to spearhead impactful and profitable initiatives in the green economy, creating a harmonious balance between economic prosperity and environmental stewardship.

As the impactful two-day conference concluded, Amos reflected on the rich discussions and invaluable contributions that had been shared. He praised the delegates for bringing together passionate and dynamic youth voices from across East Africa to tackle pressing challenges and opportunities in youth employment, green transitions, entrepreneurship, and digital transformation.

On behalf of COTU (K) and all other organizing partners, Amos extended his deepest gratitude to each participant, presenter, and facilitator. He commended their engagement, insights, and enthusiasm that made the event a success.

To the participants, he acknowledged their resilience and creativity, which build a beacon of hope for transformation in our societies. He praised them for their active participation in discussions and group activities. He agreed that this perfectly demonstrated the needs of young workers in the world of work and that young workers are not merely beneficiaries but active agents in creating sustainable, inclusive, and innovative economies.

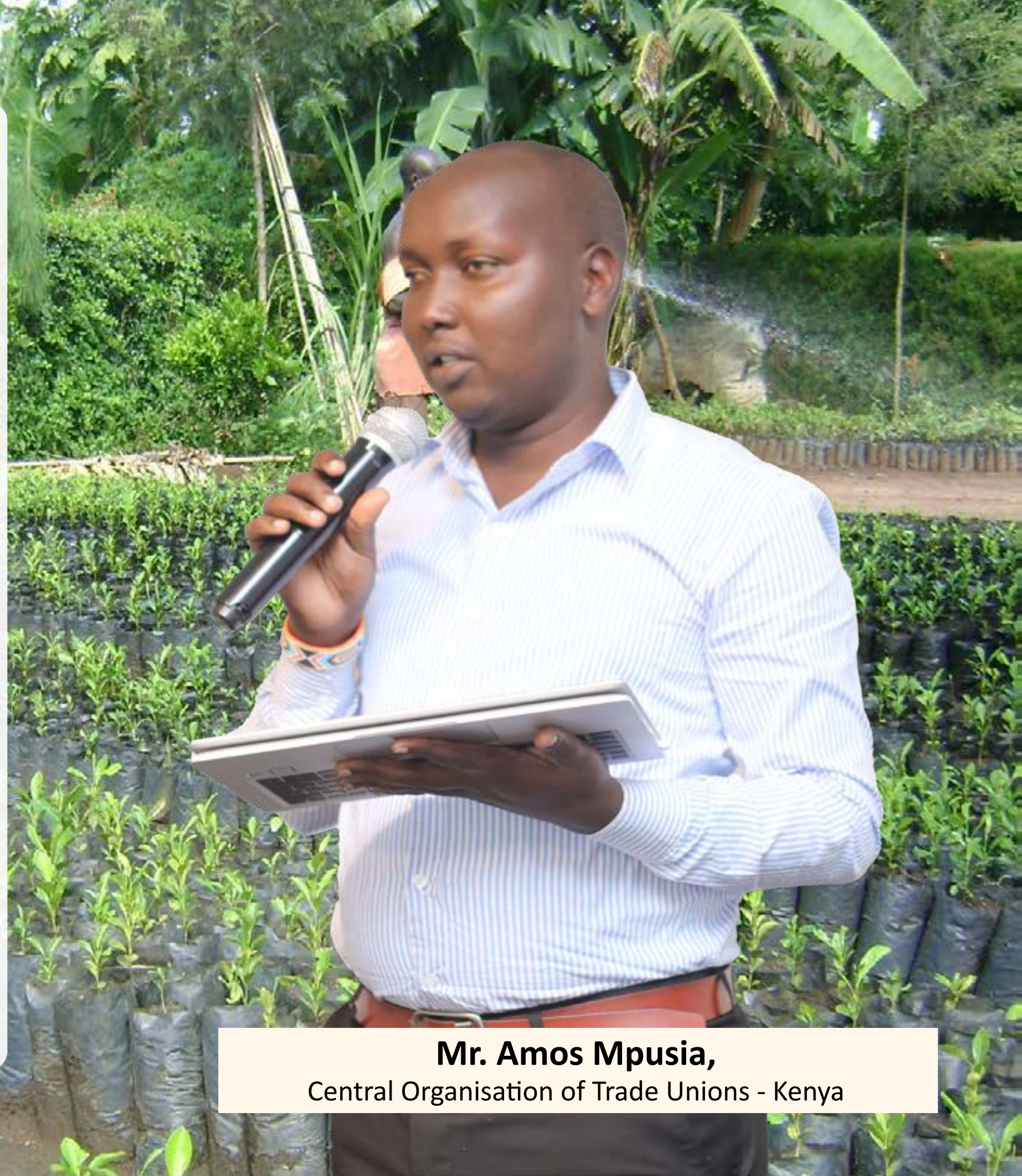
He emphasized the significance of the two-day conference, which focused on several critical issues affecting today's society. Climate Change and Just Transition underscored the vital role young workers play in facilitating the transition to a low-carbon and sustainable future. This segment explored how empowering the younger generation can lead to innovative solutions and equitable practices in climate action.

Youth and Climate Action, where participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and innovative strategies aimed at tackling ongoing climate challenges. This discussion sparked valuable exchanges on grassroots initiatives, community engagement, and the importance of youth activism in driving meaningful change.

In the session on Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy, he acknowledged that the topic equipped youth with essential tools and knowledge necessary for succeeding in both the green and digital economies. This included workshops and presentations that covered financial management, business development, and sustainable practices, aiming to prepare the next generation of entrepreneurs to thrive in an evolving economic landscape.

Towards his last remark, he noted that the conference delved into Digital Transformation, exploring how technology can be harnessed to enhance youth employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth. This segment examined the integration of digital skills training, access to technology, and the development of innovative platforms that connect young people with job opportunities in a rapidly changing job market.

Overall, the conference served as a vital platform for engaging with and addressing pressing issues related to sustainability and youth empowerment. The discussions underscored the critical role that young people play in crafting a future that is both sustainable and equitable, urging a collective effort to mobilize their potential.



Mr. Amos Mpusia,
Central Organisation of Trade Unions - Kenya

In conclusion, Amos highlighted several key takeaways from the conference which reflected the urgent priorities for youth and sustainable development:

1. **Fostering Green Skills and Youth Entrepreneurship:** There is a pressing need to cultivate green skills among youth and promote entrepreneurship that aligns with the global transition towards sustainable practices. This entails not only training but also providing the necessary resources and support for young entrepreneurs to thrive in green industries.
2. **Enabling Policies and Institutional Frameworks:** The importance of establishing supportive policies and frameworks was emphasized as essential to overcoming the barriers that hinder youth employment. This includes advocating for more inclusive labour laws and practices that recognize the unique challenges faced by young job seekers.
3. **Strengthening Education and Training Systems:** A strong call was made for enhancing education and training systems to equip young workers with the skills required for the evolving job market, particularly in green and digital economies. This means reforming curricula and providing experiential learning opportunities to better prepare youth for future careers.
4. **Building Networks and Collaborations:** The conference stressed the need for building strong networks and collaborative efforts among various stakeholders, including educational institutions, employers, and policy-makers. Such collaborations are crucial to ensure that young workers have a voice in decision-making processes and can actively participate in the implementation of transition programs aimed at fostering sustainable development.

He took a moment to commend the presenters, moderators, and various partners involved in the conference, including the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Their expertise and dedication were recognized as instrumental in facilitating meaningful dialogues that address the complex realities of the workforce.

Finally, his heartfelt gratitude was extended to the East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC) for its leadership and unwavering support in organizing the conference. Their commitment to empowering young workers across the region was acknowledged as a crucial factor in driving positive change and ensuring that the voices of youth are heard and valued in discussions related to work and sustainable development.





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Danish Trade Union Development Agency-Tanzania



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Bariki Agesa Mwiruki,
A young Climate change activist-Kenya



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