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Service Employees International Union

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, December 14, 2009

SEIU AND LIUNA SUPPORT PRESIDENT OBAMA'S EMISSION REDUCTION TARGET AND DEMAND A FAIR TRANSITION FOR WORKERS

Washington DC—Today, as world leaders seek a climate change agreement in Copenhagen, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) released a joint statement in support of President Barack Obama's 17 percent carbon emissions reduction commitment. The unions also demanded a fair transition to a low-carbon economy that does not place the burden on the shoulders of US workers and workers around the world. SEIU and LIUNA together represent over 2.5 million workers in the United States and Canada.

A delegation of labor leaders, including LIUNA General President Terry O'Sullivan, SEIU Executive Vice President Gerald Hudson, and SEIU Local 32BJ President Mike Fishman, attended the conference in Copenhagen.

"President Obama's willingness to address and establish long-term solutions to our deepening environmental problems is a night and day difference from the Bush Administration's era of climate change deniers," said Gerald Hudson, SEIU International Executive Vice President. "We support the President's 17 percent emissions reduction target and look forward to working with him on a just transition to a clean energy economy, one that ensures the availability of quality green jobs."

"We are united with the Obama Administration in finding a solution to climate change," said Terry O'Sullivan, General President of LIUNA. "Business, labor and environmental organizations should put their shoulder to the wheel and contribute to an ambitious, global agreement in Copenhagen that lays the foundation for a healthier planet and a more just economy for the people on it."

"We will work with President Obama to put in place policies to dramatically reduce emissions and create millions of good, green jobs across the economy," said Mike Fishman, SEIU International Vice President.

With 2.2 million members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is the fastest growing union in the country. The half million members of LIUNA – the Laborers' International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.

SEIU-LIUNA Statement on President Obama's Emissions Reduction Commitment at UN Climate Talks (COP 15) in Copenhagen

The Laborers' International Union of North American (LIUNA) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), who together represent over 2.5 million workers in the building trades, healthcare, public employment, and property services welcomes President Obama's emissions reduction commitment for Copenhagen announced on November 25, 2009.

The U.S., with a population that is just 5% of the global total, is responsible for 30% of the greenhouse gas

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emissions in our atmosphere. The President's commitment reflects our willingness as a country to start down the path to seriously begin addressing the climate emergency.

We recognize that the President is concerned to connect the U.S. emissions reduction commitment based on domestic legislation passed by the House and now being considered by the Senate. We urge the Senate to solidify the U.S. commitment and adopt legislation that is in line with what was passed in the House.

Given the rise in US emissions over the last 15 years, the President's 17% reduction commitment on 2005 levels is just 4 percent below 1990 levels, the internationally used baseline. To reach an 80% reduction by 2050, the scientific consensus, with only a 4% reduction by 2020 means that there must be a 76% reduction over the last three decades or roughly 25% per decade. Clearly, we have only taken a first step in the effort to reduce carbon emissions. Our unions are eager to continue the debate and move forward with additional policies to reduce carbon emissions. Our members do not want to leave the work of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions to their children and grandchildren.

We look forward to working with the President to put in place policies that can dramatically reduce emissions while at the same time advancing social and economic justice at home and abroad.

We believe that an aggressive and science-based approach to emissions reductions is not only absolutely necessary from the perspective of achieving a sustainable environment; it will be good for our economy and for working families. A clear science-based target will drive a massive increase in the generation of green jobs, public mass transit, renewable energy, green manufacturing, energy-efficient construction and building retrofits, as well as in other sectors.

The more ambitious the target, the stronger the political signal to private investors and innovators who wish to serve the green economy. Conversely, a weak target slows green job growth, serves as a drag on the global effort, and will not serve climate stability over the long term. Jobs that conserve energy, fight sprawl and congestion, ramp up zero emission energy industries, and retool and re-equip our industries according to green, and sustainable principles are the wave of the future for the U.S. and the world. With the U.S. suffering 10% unemployment and falling living standards, we need to fulfill the promise of green jobs sooner, not later.

We insist on full protections for workers negatively impacted by climate policies in accordance with the principle of just transition. Workers in energy intensive industries should not be asked to shoulder a disproportionate burden. The Administration has the power to make sure that the transition to a low carbon economy is pursued in a way that's fair to workers and supportive of impacted communities. Our nation stands at the threshold of a dramatic transformation toward a clean, green and sustainable economy. Ambitious reduction targets for 2020 and beyond can help drive this transformation, and we offer our support to the President in his efforts to bring about a fair and ambitious global agreement in Copenhagen and beyond.

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