COP31 Joint Statement by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

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As representatives of employers and workers worldwide, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) reaffirm that a just transition that integrates ILO's Fundamental Labour Rights and efficient and effective employment policies, is more essential than ever to achieving ambitious climate action while supporting economic resilience, decent work and public confidence in climate policies. The IOE, representing 50 million companies of all sizes and all sectors in 148 countries and the ITUC, representing nearly 200 million workers in 165 countries speak with one voice today to call on Governments and UNFCCC to engage with them as central actors in the real economy.

For far too long, employers' and workers' organizations have argued that nothing is more unsustainable for the planet and more inefficient in the fight against climate change than a society without opportunities for decent and productive employment. We have observed that many of the policies designed to address climate change have failed to adequately anticipate the consequences for employment, to plan for the skills that will be required, or to address the need for support mechanisms for workers and businesses, in particular for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. There have been encouraging examples of success, where social partners engaged actively in developing national, sectoral and company level climate policies. But at times, climate policies have led to job losses without appropriate transitions for companies nor social protection for the affected workers. This is concerning and does not help to change the narrative or raise public awareness. Therefore, we welcome the growing recognition within the COP process of Just Transition in national climate strategies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The priority now is implementation. Countries need practical guidance, technical assistance and institutional support to translate commitments into concrete measures and measurable outcomes.

Parties should adopt coherent, economy-wide Just Transition strategies that align climate, employment, skills, industrial, social protection and investment policies. Climate investments should support sustainable enterprise development, job creation, and opportunities for workers and communities.

Skills development will be critical to the success of the transition, particularly as economies accelerate electrification and deploy new technologies. Governments, employers, workers and education and training institutions should work together to anticipate changing skills needs and expand access to reskilling and upskilling opportunities. Greater investment in work-based learning, apprenticeships and training systems aligned with labour market demand will be essential to address skills shortages, support enterprise competitiveness and ensure that workers can access emerging employment opportunities.

Governments, Employers and Workers organisations have already agreed on a way forward for just transitions. We, representatives of employers and trade unions at COP31, want that the COP31 negotiations on the Just Transition Work Programme and the Mechanism strongly refer to the internationally agreed foundations of a just transition established by governments, employers and workers at the International Labour Conference in June 2023.

The ILO Just Transition Guidelines (2015), endorsed by strong consensus, remain the central reference for policy and action. This consensus, rooted in the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and on more efficient and effective employment and skill policies, should be the basis for the Just Transition Work Programme and the Mechanism under negotiation under the UNFCCC framework. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has a unique role in advancing just transitions and should continue to provide leadership, technical expertise, policy guidance and knowledge-sharing to help countries design and implement Just Transition measures adapted to national circumstances.

A Just Transition is the pathway through which climate ambition becomes economic opportunity, social progress and shared prosperity. It is not an optional component of climate policy. It is the foundation upon which successful climate action depends. Unions and employers are united in ensuring that the employment dimension remains at the heart of the important discussions taking place at COP31 in Antalya, recognizing that successful transitions must deliver for workers, enterprises and labour markets alike. As the global voices of employers and workers, IOE and ITUC combine first-hand knowledge of labour market realities with the ability to mobilize stakeholders and drive needed implementation.

IOE and ITUC stand ready to work with governments and international institutions to support practical, implementation-oriented approaches that deliver economic opportunity, social progress and shared prosperity.