

SECTION 4

GENERAL COUNCIL STATEMENTS

01. TUC Anti-Racism Task Force

Over two decades ago, the TUC with our trade unions set up the Stephen Lawrence Task Group which oversaw our work to tackle institutional racism, because we knew that no organisations or institutions – including trade unions – were exempt from the possibility of institutional racism.

In the 20 years since the report of the TUC Stephen Lawrence Task Group, we have made important strides forward. We have published biennial equality audits, delivered training for union reps on tackling racism, and reformed our union rulebooks to put the fight against racism front and centre. These are important developments on which we can and should build. But it is clear that despite the progress made at that time, more must be done. We know that what matters most is what happens in our workplaces where we also need to see real and progressive change that ensures that Black workers are valued, respected and treated fairly and with dignity at work.

Our members rightly expect us to stand together with them, united in fighting for fairness and justice at work and in our communities. We owe it to our Black members to repay the trust they place in us every day and to do whatever it takes to win the fight against racism at work.

Workers' rights at work are being threatened daily and union-busting tactics are becoming commonplace. Black workers, in particular, are facing mounting battles in fighting racism, securing safe and decent permanent jobs and in fighting the cost-of-living crisis and for racial justice.

Black workers' lived experiences of racism in the workplace and in wider society need solidarity and support from the trade union and labour movement.

The experience of many Black workers during the pandemic, reflected decades of engrained inequalities in our labour market, and within society more broadly. BME workers, who were disproportionately impacted through the pandemic by deaths and Covid-related job losses, are now significantly more likely to be trapped in unemployment, poverty, insecurity and low pay than their white counterparts.

Our trade union fight for decent jobs, fair pay, healthy and safe workplaces, dignity at work, and for the rights of workers to be respected is central to our fight for racial justice. Economic and social justice for Black workers must be at the centre of all our work.

Congress applauds the pivotal work of the TUC Anti-Racism Task Force, the TUC Race Relations Committee, the TUC Black Workers Conference, and affiliates in the programme of work that has taken place over the last two years. Congress believes that this is a watershed moment, over two decades since the publication of the TUC Stephen Lawrence Task Group Report in 2001.

Congress commends the adoption of this landmark report of the Anti-Racism Task Force and urges all unions to take concrete actions to build our movement; strengthen, grow and diversify our membership to build workers' power. Congress commits to ensure that the pendulum is swung in favour of workers in the world of work and wider society.

Congress urges every union to demonstrate their commitment to implementing concrete actions on anti-racism and to continue the work to deliver anti-racist workplaces.

Our Anti-Racism Action Plan and Manifesto

Congress calls on the TUC and affiliates to commit to the Anti-Racism Manifesto and the Action Plan to build an anti-racist trade union movement.

Congress commends the adoption of the landmark General Council Anti-Racism Task Force report and pledge to work jointly with the TUC and affiliates to take concrete actions on:

Building our movement

Strengthening, growing and diversifying our membership, winning for Black workers on race discrimination and centring racial equality in our collective bargaining agreements to build workers' power and trust.

Fighting for our rights

Campaigning for secure and safe jobs, fighting for workers' rights. Banning zero-hours contracts, comprehensive monitoring covering ethnicity pay gaps, ending fire and rehire, and introducing fair pay agreements. Holding the government to account, demanding stronger legislation and enforcement to improve Black workers' labour market experiences.

Leading by example

Acting on the concerns of Black staff and changing our employment practices to ensure that our unions are truly inclusive workplaces.

Time to change

We ask trade union leaders, general secretaries and executive bodies to declare and sign up to our commitments to transform the cultures of our organisations and workplaces.

The next phase of our work begins with the following.

1. Publication of the Anti-Racism Action Plan to build an anti-racist trade union movement and its widest promotion dissemination across all unions.
2. Commitment by all affiliates to our Anti-Racism Manifesto declaration – our commitment to transform the cultures of our organisations and workplaces.

3. Establishing the mechanism to ensure implementation, measuring and monitoring the delivery of the Anti-Racism Task Force report actions, through the work of the Implementation and oversight group led by the general secretary and with a pivotal role for the TUC Race Relations Committee in reviewing progress.
4. Monitoring and reporting quarterly to the General Council and annually to Congress on the progress we have made in delivering our actions on collective bargaining, organising, public policy and unions as employers over the next five years.
5. In addition, we will build on the work of the Anti-Racism Task Force by:
 - Using the framework of the Anti-Racism Task Force to build anti-racism action plans within unions and across sectors
 - Mapping, monitoring year on year progress
 - Publishing data and trends regarding the employment and representation of Black workers within the TUC and affiliated unions
 - Actively engage with union executives and Black members in order to sustain our action on anti-racism.

We believe that these actions will be a basis for securing lasting change.

Congress endorses the report, action plan and manifesto, and further work to deliver race equality at work and in our unions.

02. We Demand Better: a trade union response to the new government, the cost-of-living emergency and the coming recession

Workers are facing a real pay emergency. The longest and deepest squeeze on real wages for two hundred years has turned into a pay crisis, as prices soar while wages stand still. The latest figures show the largest real wage falls on record. That's on top of the £20,000 worth of wages workers have lost out on due to pay not keeping up with inflation since the financial crisis.

Working families are being pushed to the brink. One in five kids in key worker households are already facing poverty, and despite the government's energy intervention, energy prices will still be double what they were last year. Food and other costs are rising too, forcing more people into desperate choices between feeding their families and heating their homes.

But the crisis isn't hitting everyone equally. CEO pay rose by 39 per cent in 2021. City bonuses hit record levels. And profits at some of our biggest companies are soaring – even as they protest that they can't afford to give their workers a decent pay rise. We don't need wage restraint to curb price rises – we need profit restraint. The government is lifting the cap on bankers' bonuses while driving down public servants' pay.

This crisis wasn't inevitable. Workers around the world are having to cope with rising energy prices, exacerbated by the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, which we condemn. But workers in the UK are facing the worst wage squeeze in the developed world – as twelve years of Tory government have embedded the interests of wealth over those of workers.

We've seen a decade of austerity starving not just our public services of vital funding, but our economy of investment. We've seen no action to help workers on insecure work into a steady job – instead we've seen zero-hours contracts and insecure jobs soar. Public sector pay has been cut in real terms, universal credit and disability benefits have been slashed, sick pay

remains pitiful and the triple lock on pensions has been abandoned. Funding for skills has been decimated, and there's no plan to deliver the good jobs we need in the industries of the future. Ministers threatened a trade war with our largest trading partner and put the peace process in Northern Ireland at risk.

Rather than set out a plan to address this, the new Tory prime minister and her chancellor have delivered a mini-budget that was Robin Hood in reverse. They cut taxes for the highest earners, promised tax cuts for big business and took the cap off bankers' bonuses. Their actions spooked the financial system, causing the pound to tumble in value and forcing the Bank of England into an emergency intervention to stabilise the markets. Just ten days after her mini-budget the prime minister was forced into an embarrassing u-turn on the 45p tax rate cut – but the damage was done, with mortgage costs and prices left far higher than before.

Now ministers are threatening to further attacks on our public services and benefits to pay for their tax cuts, in a new era of austerity.

Trade unions are fighting back against the assault on jobs, pay and conditions. But ministers now want to double down on their attacks on the right to strike.

The Cameron government passed the unfair and unnecessary 2016 trade union act. Despite this attack on the right to strike, unions are still winning for the workers they represent, so now government wants to go further. Under Boris Johnson, we saw the shameful introduction of regulations allowing bad bosses to replace workers on strike for better pay and conditions with agency labour. Trade unions are fighting this change in the courts, so they want to go further still. Under Liz Truss, working people are now threatened with the imposition of minimum service levels and other restrictions, in a deliberate attempt to make striking to defend pay and conditions harder.

And on top of attacking collective rights, ministers want to take away the individual rights that unions have fought for. They are proposing primary legislation to sunset all EU-derived legislation, including important rights at work such as paid holiday, safe limits on working time and parental leave, at the end of 2023, unless it is explicitly transposed to UK law. This would strip away our hard-won rights and create legislative chaos.

We can't go on like this.

When we fight together, we win together. Over the year to come, we will mobilise members to oppose this Tory government which has abandoned working people. We will demand a government that acts in workers' interests.

The best protection for working people is always to be part of a union, acting together in defence of working people, our families and our communities.

All summer and into the autumn, unions' industrial campaigns have dominated the headlines. Our industrial action has opened many workers' eyes to the opportunity of organising together at work – and exposed a new audience to our arguments. Many disputes have succeeded in winning decent pay rises in a time of soaring inflation. This autumn and winter, more workers will be balloted – and more will walk out in defence of their jobs and in pursuit of a fair pay rise.

In the coming months, we will mobilise our members to make their voices heard, using imaginative and creative tactics to show there is an alternative to the hardship of soaring bills, spiking inflation and one million unemployed. We will be in town halls and on the

streets in huge numbers demanding change. Following our Day of Action, which saw hundreds of local events held around the country, on 2 November we will hold a mass lobby and rally in London to make our voices heard.

The TUC will support unions to win ballots and vault the undemocratic thresholds that seek to prevent workers acting in defence of their interests. Through our Solidarity Hub we will mobilise trade unionists in solidarity behind industrial campaigns. And we will coordinate industrial action by our member unions, amplifying the impact of our action and making our demands impossible to ignore.

We know that a trade union agenda for change would be transformative for a country broken by twelve years of austerity and twelve years of standstill wages. We have done the work to develop our asks over the past few years, through our New Deal for Working People and will continue work to see our long-term goals adopted as a programme for government.

We want an economy that prioritises investment and good jobs and that delivers high wages. We want to lift up women workers and Black workers and meet the challenges of net zero and new technology. A country where universal credit and pensions provide incomes people can live on, and where industries of strategic importance for the economy including vital energy infrastructure and the railways, are owned by us all. And we want a country where our workers and unions have the positive framework rights they need to bargain and win more for workers.

But in this emergency, we will stand united as one trade union movement behind seven immediate demands to stabilise the economy and help working families through the winter:

1. A £15 minimum wage as soon as possible
2. A real-terms pay rise for public sector workers
3. Ban zero-hours contracts and stop fire-and-rehire
4. Cut bills and introduce common ownership in the energy system
5. New union bargaining rights for whole industries – protect the right to strike
6. Hike universal credit and pensions now
7. Raise women's incomes and stop workplace racism.

In a crisis, we believe the UK response is stronger and better when it calls on trade union advice alongside input from business. During the pandemic, trade unions designed and campaigned for furlough – and the resulting scheme, which supported millions of families and saved millions of jobs, was testament to our movement. And furlough has another lesson: that governments can powerfully intervene to protect their citizens - and should do so in times of crisis.

This summer, the trade union movement has taken centre stage. For the first time in a generation we are being heard. Young workers, cheated throughout successive crises, are turning to trade unionism. A majority of working people are on our side. Our demands have overwhelming popular support – and in the teeth of a crisis, we have the answers as to how we build an economy that never again plunges working people into hardship and misery.

In the year to come, we must meet the challenge of protecting the jobs, rights and livelihoods of our members and of all working people, while seeking to grow our movement, and demanding a government that puts workers first.

Throughout we will keep on pushing for a collective transfer of power and wealth to working people in the UK and around the world. Through the power of solidarity, trade unions can be a source of hope and inspiration to millions – and that will be needed in the year to come.

03. A world to win

From the cost-of-living crisis, the climate emergency and major conflict, working people around the world face huge challenges on many fronts. Our response must be compassionate, internationalist and united.

The General Council sends solidarity with all those suffering from the impact of war around the world, from Ukraine to Yemen. We also send our solidarity to those experiencing the devastation of the climate crisis, not least the people of Pakistan, and stand with their many friends and family in the UK.

The TUC condemns Russia's illegal invasion of a sovereign nation and adds our voice to the demand that Russia must withdraw and respect Ukrainian territorial integrity. In light of the alarming escalation of the conflict, the TUC sends our solidarity to the Ukrainian people and our sister trade union movement facing further horror and suffering. We condemn attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure and call on all parties to respect international law. According to the UNHCR there are now at least 6.2 million people internally displaced.

We join the Ukrainian trade union movement in condemning the roll back of labour rights and trade union freedoms in Ukraine. We condemn the British Government's role in advocating these changes.

We join the global union movement in promoting the cause of peace and advocating negotiated solutions to conflict through diplomacy.

It is always children and civilians who suffer most in war and who stand to gain most from winning peace with justice. We send our solidarity to all those bravely speaking out for peace in Russia and around the world. We condemn any threat to use nuclear weapons and call for urgent efforts to be made to reach a negotiated solution through diplomacy.

The international trade union movement, representing hundreds of millions of working people, has a unique role to play in building peace and social justice. The TUC commits to building a working-class vision of a peaceful and just society.

We condemn the brutal killing of Mahsa Amini at the hands of Iran's notorious 'morality police' and stand in solidarity with the millions of people in Iran, including workers, who are bravely opposing the country's discriminatory laws, oppression, and injustice. We condemn the Iranian authorities, who have launched a ruthless crackdown against the nationwide protests, including the widespread use of lethal force and killings.

We applaud workers in Iran who are striking in defence of young women. Trade unionists are inspired by the young women in the frontline of these protests. We extend our support and solidarity in their struggle against repression. We demand the release of all imprisoned trade unionists and all others unjustly detained in Iran.

Workers are also facing human and labour rights abuses in numerous countries. We believe that the UK should not sign trade deals with regimes that systematically abuse human rights. The TUC will campaign against forthcoming deals with Israel, India, the Gulf States and other human rights abusing governments. Protecting working people's jobs, rights, data and public

services should be at the heart of fair trade deals, with effective enforcement mechanisms, and our unions should be represented at the table.

We will continue to work with sister trade unions around the world to lift workers' rights and living standards, including by opposing the illegal US blockade of Cuba, and delivering practical solidarity through TUC Aid. We reaffirm our commitment to building solidarity with workers in Brazil, Colombia, Palestine, and Turkey.

We send our solidarity to the people of Brazil in the face of far-right President Bolsonaro's attacks on organised labour, black and indigenous Brazilians, women's rights, LGBT+ rights and the environment. Bolsonaro has threatened to undermine the forthcoming election at every turn. The TUC will actively support efforts to ensure a free and fair second round election in Brazil. We hope for a victory for workers against the far right, which means a victory for Lula.

The General Council congratulates the Colombian people on electing their first ever left-wing government on a platform of fully implementing the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the FARC, tackling inequality, and putting an end to ongoing conflict and killings of activists. The TUC commits to ongoing solidarity with the people of Colombia.

The General Council condemns the continuous human rights abuses faced by the Palestinian people and reiterates our call for an end to Israel's illegal occupation. Congress condemns Israel's renewed bombing of Gaza in August 2022 killing 44 Palestinians, including 15 children, the subsequent rocket fire into Israel, and notes the UN Special Rapporteur's description of the attack as illegal under international law. It also condemns the Israeli army's killing of the Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and beating of her coffin bearers by Israeli police, and supports the application made in April to the International Criminal Court calling for an investigation into the Israeli government's systematic targeting of journalists. We condemn the outlawing of seven NGOs including the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, Addameer and Defence for Children International – Palestine.

The TUC recognises the conclusion of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian Territories this year that within those territories "the political system of entrenched rule ... satisfies the prevailing evidentiary standard for the existence of apartheid". The TUC commits to ongoing solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for freedom and equality and will oppose fully any UK legislation aimed at preventing legitimate democratic solidarity actions in support of the Palestinian people. We call for an ethical policy on all UK trade with Israel including banning trade with illegal settlements and ending the ongoing arms trade.

We condemn the ongoing repression in Turkey under the authoritarian Erdoğan regime, which has led to trade unionists and opposition figures put on trial on spurious accusations of terrorism and call for their release. The TUC will continue to support our sister unions there. The TUC reaffirms its commitment to supporting the Freedom for Ocalan campaign and its call for the release of Ocalan as a step towards restarting a peace process.

As Brazil shows all too clearly, wherever the far right emerges, we see an attack on workers' rights, on migrant workers and refugees, ethnic minorities, women, LGBT+ and other groups. We will resist these attacks wherever they take place, including in the UK, and stand with all refugees and migrant workers seeking safety and dignity. And we will work to tackle the structural racism that underpins global inequality, exposed so clearly in the huge global inequity in access to vaccines against coronavirus.

Organised labour is the strongest and last line of defence against the far right, and the TUC will continue to work internationally to build an industrial response drawing on sister unions' experience of tackling the far right and fascism. We support all those confronting this threat.

The rise of far-right populism around the world has been fuelled by decades of neoliberalism and inequality. There is an alternative - a hopeful vision of a fair and just global economy that delivers for workers.

To challenge corporate power, we need thorough reform and democratisation of international financial institutions and the world trade organisation, meaningful inclusion of global south countries in decision making, protection of public services and jobs and respect for human and workers' rights enforced along global supply chains. And with the climate emergency threatening lives and livelihoods around the world, we must ensure urgent and practical action for a just transition to a safe climate future.

The General Council believes it is vital to maintain a strong internationalist approach and will continue to play an active role in the international movement, including in the ITUC and ETUC.

We will continue to work with unions internationally to combat the far right, including launching political education materials and building union led initiatives to create far right free workplaces.

We will support global campaigns to organise in multinational workplaces to tackle corporate greed and profiteering and deliver dignity at work.

We will work with sister unions around the world to build peace based on social justice and equality.

We will continue to build international solidarity between workers across borders and stand up against oppression and injustice.

Despite the challenges, workers are achieving inspiring victories.

In the United States, a resurgence of trade union organising is taking place under a pro union administration. Workers are taking on global corporations like Amazon and Starbucks and winning.

The Spanish trade union movement, through social dialogue with a progressive coalition government, has seen major pro-labour reforms. Sectoral collective bargaining is being rolled out, insecure and temporary work is being reigned in, and the first legislation on protecting gig economy workers has been enacted.

In New Zealand, the Labour government is bringing in trade union endorsed fair pay agreements, bringing whole sectors into the scope of national collective bargaining.

The challenges we face are immense. But we know that through working class internationalism, solidarity, and unity they can be overcome. Let's fight for peace, social justice and the dignity that workers deserve. We have a world to win.

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