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The labour movement response to climate change: a case study of South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU)

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on challenges faced by SATAWU in responding to climate change. Climate change is a reality that will have negative effects in the world, the workers and the poor will be mostly affected. It is anticipated that responding to climate change could involve job losses in carbon intensive areas. The road transport sub-sector jobs are the most vulnerable in the whole transportation industry due to their high carbon intensity. A just transition to a low carbon economy is seen as an approach which will balance the jobs created with jobs lost. The notion of sustainable development and environmental justice are presented as a counter to the present mode of production and consumption which have caused this ecological crisis. A qualitative case study on SATAWU was chosen to assess the responses to the challenges posed by climate change. This included in-depth interviews with shop stewards and officials in the trade union, participant observation in their climate change meetings, a review of the secondary literature and analysis of documents from the labour movement. The research found that there is a limited understanding about climate change amongst members of SATAWU. This is serious and must be addressed in extensive worker education.

DECLARATION

I Hlalele Hlalele declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Labour Policy and Globalization at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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HLALELE HLALELE

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this research to my union Lesotho Clothing and Allied Workers Union (LECAWU) which build my trade union career, to International Textile Garment Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) Africa Regional Secretary (Thabo Tshabalala), Administrator (Ningi) and Daniel Maraisane (LECAWU) who have given me the edge in the labour movement.