

# Public Services International

*and the*

## Rio+20 Earth Summit

June 2012



Public Services International  
Internationale des Services Publics  
Internacional de Servicios Públicos  
Internationale der Öffentlichen Dienste  
Internationell Facklig Organisation för Offentliga Tjänster  
國際公務勞連

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## INTRODUCTION

The general failure of the Rio +20 negotiations presents threats and opportunities for public service unions. These will require local and national level responses, as well as coordination across regions and globally.

For many, the 'magic hand of the market' has been discredited. Consumer capitalism is causing the collapse of the Earth's living systems. The excesses of the corporate lobby, including, but not limited to, the financial sector, are more plain to see, and more shocking. Corporate control of national and global institutions is growing.

The threats of the failure at Rio include the vacuum caused by incapable and unwilling governments, both nationally and globally. Into this space are stepping the corporations, which have targeted control of public services as their next big source of profits. To this they will add greater control of natural resources. More privatisations, and more tools to extract profits from labour and from tariffs, which will determine access to public services. This outcome also signals the gradual demise of the multilateral system and reductions in foreign aid, or its more blatant linkage to resource extraction and privatisation.

The opportunities arise out of the many crises, the outrage of working people and our communities at being treated so poorly. This may generate a focus around the need to organise locally for answers to problems, including greater awareness on the role of public services in providing justice and equity. Global campaigns could rise in prominence, such as the financial transactions tax campaign; regulating the financial sector; limiting corporate capture of our public institutions and our commons; implementing the right to water; the right to energy, etc.

PSI engaged in five general activities at Rio:

- ITUC Trade Union Assembly
- People's Summit
- The financial transactions tax (Robin Hood Tax) campaign
- Intersessional thematic dialogues, hosted by government of Brazil
- Formal United Nations negotiation process

## SUMMARY OUTCOMES OF THE RIO+20 NEGOTIATIONS

**Fifty pages of text. 24,000 words. More than two years of official negotiations. Empty promises. Corporate takeover. Government abdication of responsibilities on environmental and social sustainability.**

There is almost universal agreement that the two years of negotiations culminating in the Rio+20 text failed to deliver a political vision and action programme for dealing with the major issues of sustainability. A ‘compromise’ text was delivered at the last moment by the Brazilian government.

See the official text in various languages at:  
[www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html](http://www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html)



One thousand non-profit groups, trade unions and individuals requested that the opening sentence of the final document that claimed “with the full participation of civil society” be retracted (it was not). The civil society groups renamed this text “The Future We Don’t Want” – citing failures on removing fossil fuel subsidies, protecting oceans, and the lack of recognition of reproductive rights as essential to sustainable development, among many concerns.

At best, Rio sets in motion further negotiations, designed to culminate in a series of commitments in 2014, currently known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At worst, the outcome of Rio+20 is an abdication by governments of many of the original precepts of the 1992 Earth Summit, including turning their back on: civil society participation; increased global governance to resolve global problems; financial assistance from wealthy countries, etc. It further signifies the corporate co-optation of national governments and also the United Nations. The text includes no meaningful attempt to regulate or control corporate activities. Indeed, it actively promotes public-private partnerships as the only “commendable” model throughout.

Para 46. We recognize that the active participation of the private sector can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including through the important tool of public-private partnerships.

Para 71. We encourage existing and new partnerships, including public-private partnerships, to mobilize public financing complemented by the private sector, taking into account the interests of local and indigenous communities when appropriate.

Para 217. We commend existing public-private partnerships and call for continued, new and innovative public-private partnerships among industry, governments, academia and other non-governmental stakeholders aiming to enhance capacity and technology for environmentally sound chemicals and waste management, including for waste prevention.

Para 280. We invite all relevant agencies of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations to support developing countries and, in particular, the least developed countries in capacity-building for developing resource-efficient and inclusive economies, including through:

...(d) Promoting public-private partnerships.

“/...”



Most governments in Rio were acting out of fear, provoked by the combination of financial, environmental and food crises. This combination has already caused a number of governments to fall. Governments are thus focusing on short-term solutions, including economic growth, but within some narrow restrictions. Many developing countries are selling their natural resources as quickly as possible, including long-term leases of huge tracts of 'unoccupied' land to foreign interests. Rich countries are caught up with the restrictions of short-sighted austerity policies.

The divide between developing and developed countries remained wide throughout the negotiations. Clearly, every country was out to protect its interests. Missing was a sense of common purpose and direction.

One of the most contentious issues was the concept of the green economy (GE) which carries the assumption that we must continue to increase consumption in order to create jobs. This somehow implies that we can all consume more, but do so using fewer natural resources. Although still vague, the GE concept includes an increasing role for the private sector, and the potential financialisation of natural resources. In the case of putting a price on pollution or degradation of our natural commons – the air, water and land – these resources are invaluable now and for future generations and cannot be compensated financially.

One analysis indicates that the UN system has created far too many treaties and conventions (over 500 in the past 50 years), most of which are either ignored by national governments or overstepped by the growing number of trade agreements, which can actually block governments from implementing green policies.

Another analysis indicates that a number of countries, notably the USA and Canada, were undermining the multilateral approach of the UN, preferring to resolve issues through bilateral negotiations. For many, the position of Canada has regressed greatly from the years when it was viewed as a progressive leader in the UN.

## PSI GOALS FOR THE RIO+20 SUMMIT



Our strongest sector focus was in water, where we hoped to preserve the right to water language in the official text and to strengthen our campaigning and our links with civil society through our work at the People’s Summit.

Importantly for PSI and our communities, the right to water was preserved in the text – in itself a significant achievement given the opposition from a number of powerful countries, including Canada and the USA. The proposed language on universal access was removed, in favour of progressive realization of the right, within national confines.

Para 121. We reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, to be progressively realized for our populations with full respect for national sovereignty.

Another priority was to promote a strong public service message in the ITUC-TUCA Workers’ Assembly. PSI representatives advocated against privatisation, and in favour of a Social Protection Floor (SPF), quality public services (QPS), and the need for fair taxation to fund public services – particularly in the form of a financial transactions tax.

A related priority was to strengthen global civil society partnerships and give international profile to the financial transactions tax (Robin Hood Tax) campaign and the *Quality Public Services-Action Now!* campaign through a series of public events during Rio+20. Please see details below on our successful FTT activities.

From the trade union perspective, many years of ITUC-led lobbying have paid off with significant recognition of labour rights and Just Transition mechanisms in the moves to a low-carbon economy. However, it appears as if there are few actual moves to a low-carbon economy and hence these wins may be empty. The mechanisms may, however, serve as useful references for future negotiations.

Further implications for PSI affiliates include the crucial role of public services in offering solutions for sustainability challenges – not only are they essential for creating just societies, but they are also labour intensive, generating much-needed jobs. The *Quality Public Services-Action Now!* campaign is an ideal means to promote sustainability, even if this is barely recognised in the negotiated text.

## PSI'S INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION IN RIO INCLUDED:

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- Asociación Sindical de Profesionales de la Salud de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (CICOP), Argentina
- Asociación Paraguaya de Enfermería (APE), Paraguay
- Asociación Nacional de Profesionales en Enfermería, Costa Rica
- Federação Nacional dos Enfermeiros (FNE), Brasil
- Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Seguridade Social (CNTSS), Brasil
- Federação de Trabalhadores das Universidades Brasileiras (FASUBRA)/CONTUA, Brasil
- Federación Sindical de Profesionales de la Salud de la República Argentina (FESPROSA), Argentina
- Federación de Funcionarios de Obras Sanitarias del Estado (FFOSE), Uruguay
- Federação Nacional dos Urbanitários da CUT (FNU-CUT), Brazil
- Federación de Trabajadores del Agua Potable y Alcantarillado (FENTAP), Peru
- Federation of Trade Unions - Health Services (FTU-HS), Bulgaria
- Prospect, United Kingdom
- PSI regional and secretariat staff representatives
- Sindicato de Trabajadores de Acuavalle SA ESP (SINTRACUAVALLE), Colombia
- Sindicato de Trabajadores Hospital Universitario San Ignacio (SINTRASANIGNACIO), Colombia
- Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Medicina, Hospitales y Similares (SITRAMEDHYS), Honduras
- Sindicato Único de Trabajadores del Gobierno del Distrito Federal (SUTGDF), México
- Sindicato de Trabajadores del Distrito de Bogotá (SINDISTRITALES), Colombia
- Sindicato de Trabajadores de Enfermería (SINATRAE), República Dominicana
- Sindicato dos Enfermeiros do Estado de São Paulo (SEESP), Brasil
- Sindicato dos Enfermeiros do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
- Unión de Trabajadores del Hospital de Clínicas (UTHC)/ CONTUA, Uruguay

## ITUC WORKERS' ASSEMBLY

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ITUC and its regional arm TUCA organised a three day trade union assembly, which gathered some 500 leaders and activists from around the world. PSI Inter-Americas ensured that PSI delegates attended from a number of countries in the region.

The three key demands of the trade union movement:

1. Green and Decent Jobs. This requires a shift in investments which will ensure decent jobs are created from environmentally-friendly investments, and millions more are transformed into sustainable jobs.
2. The Social Protection Floor that addresses the most vulnerable and would ensure that all workers and their families are protected against the multiple environmental and economic crises they face.
3. The launch of a global financial transactions tax that would provide funds for development, quality public services, and climate change action, and help to reform the financial system that caused the financial crisis in the first place.

On the second day, participants were organised into thematic working groups. PSI co-facilitated the discussion on access to natural resources, including water and energy services. The final text from the workers' assembly reflected many of PSI's priorities including a focus on public renewable energy solutions.

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*See the final statement at: [www.ituc-csi.org/trade-union-assembly-demands-real.html](http://www.ituc-csi.org/trade-union-assembly-demands-real.html)*

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**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:** PSI encourages affiliates to discuss this text at their national trade union centres in view of developing quality public services campaigns and alliances at local and national levels, including policy input.

## PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

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The People's Summit was organised along the lines of the World Social Forum, and included a broad range of issues and tens of thousands of participants.

For the water sector, PSI and our allies built the Blue Pavilion which was reserved for discussion of water issues (this was the only sector with a dedicated space over nine days). It enabled us to advance our traditional work on resistance to privatisation and strengthening public services, and it also allowed us to meet and give space to other activists working on water and mining, water and agriculture, oceans, etc. A further advantage of having our own pavilion was that we avoided the logistical confusion of the People's Summit. The Blue Pavilion was perhaps the most well attended venue throughout the Summit. Sessions ran from 09:00 through 20:00 daily. PSI affiliates from Latin America organised and spoke at many of the sessions. Brazilian affiliate FNU also organised a session on energy using the Blue Pavilion venue.

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*For PSI photos of Blue Pavilion workshops, see: [www.flickr.com/photos/psi\\_isk/sets/72157630493562398/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/psi_isk/sets/72157630493562398/)*

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On 20 June, PSI members joined an estimated 50,000-80,000 people in the People's Summit march, which featured a strong showing from the labour movement, and a strong critique of the pro-business Green Economy proposals.

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*For PSI photos of the march, see: [www.flickr.com/photos/psi\\_isk/sets/72157630493439824/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/psi_isk/sets/72157630493439824/)*

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**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:** PSI encourages affiliates to adopt and share the People's Summit final statements and to strengthen national alliances with other movements related to water. PSI to sponsor research on a number of new issues, including financialisation of water, land grabbing and water, etc.

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*See: <http://cupuladospovos.org.br/en/2012/07/declaration-of-the-blue-pavilion-water-is-a-commons/>*

*and: <http://cupuladospovos.org.br>*

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## INTERSESSIONAL THEMATIC DIALOGUES

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The Brazilian government organised four days of high level debates on ten specific themes. Although not the formal UN process, they were held in the UN negotiating chambers, and the conclusions fed into the roundtable discussions of heads of state. The Brazilians organised an interactive, internet-based survey to help determine the core priorities for the water sector. They estimate that over 60,000 people participated. The internet voting selected the top priority as related ecosystem protection. The second priority, voted by the approximately 2000 members of the audience, was on the right to water. The third priority, which the 10 panellists were able to choose, became an amalgam - with the private sector trying to focus on valuing water as an input, whereas PSI pushed for more aggressive international agreements.

PSI participation on the panel was only realised through pressure on the government of Brazil from PSI, our Brazilian affiliate FNU and their national centre CUT, with support from ITUC.

Among the main panellists were private sector representatives from the World Water Council and a number of their allies, including the beverage company Coca-Cola. The comments by PSI's Utilities Officer were critical of both corporate capture and government timidity, and well received by the audience.

Loic Fauchon, head of the World Water Council, as well as head of the private water utility in Marseille, France, was selected as rapporteur of our group for the UN process in a non-transparent selection. He reported the outcomes to a meeting of heads of state.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:** Disseminate outcomes, including video and document links, to affiliates.

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*See the UN video of panel presentations and discussion (note this is a panel of ten speakers; initial remarks by PSI Utilities Officer David Boys start at 38:16): <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/conferencessummits/rio20-13-22-june-2012-rio-de-janeiro-brazil/rio-dialogue-days/watch/water-sustainable-development-dialogues-rio20/1695881185001>*

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## FORMAL UN NEGOTIATIONS

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The official Earth Summit negotiating process was taken over at the last minute by the Brazilian government host as it was clear that the governments would not finish in time.

The final document reflects a victory for pro-market actors: Green Economy (GE) is accepted – with some reservations which give primacy to national governments. Developing countries were very concerned about the GE concept, including it being used as a way to assert corporate control over natural resources. They expressed serious concern about the draft language, which was watered down in the end.

“...member states did not agree on a singular definition of “green economy” but instead said that it was “one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and that it could provide options for policy making but should not be a rigid set of rules” (para 56). Similarly, member states agreed that “the implementation of green economy policies” was a part of “the transition towards sustainable development” for “countries that seek to apply them” and that “each country can choose an appropriate approach in accordance with national sustainable development plans, strategies and priorities.” (para 59). Finally, member states “acknowledge that a mix of measures, including regulatory, voluntary and others applied at the national level and consistent with obligations under international agreements, could promote green economy[.]” (para 63) It was concluded that “policies for green economy... should be guided by and in accordance with all the Rio principles, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation[.]” (para 57) clearly founding the notion in the existing framework for sustainable development.

Constraints and parameters for “green economy policies” are also set out in para 58 and include that they must:

“respect national sovereignty over natural resources” (a); “be support by an enabling environment... with a leading role for governments” (c); “take into account the needs of developing countries” (e); “strengthen international cooperation, including the provision of financial resources, capacity building and technology transfer to developing countries” (f); “not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade” (h); “contribute to closing technology gaps” (i); “enhance the welfare of indigenous peoples” (j); “ensure equal contribution of both women and men” (l); address the concern about inequalities (n); promote sustainable consumption and production patterns (o). [TWN RIO+20 News Update No. 17: Overview of outcome and negotiations of “green economy”, 20 June 2012]

A useful analysis is provided by economist Tim Jackson, author of the book “Prosperity without Growth.” Jackson posits that the western model of consumerism is unsustainable and that systemic change is required, not just modifications on the edges. His main point is to challenge the concept of growth, which is held out as a non-negotiable fundament of modern society. Yet growth is not a guarantor of happiness and well-being, which is “more social and psychological, it’s about identification, affiliation, participation in society and a sense of purpose... You could in principle build a society in which people were fulfilling their needs and flourishing as human beings in a higher way than in a consumer society, provided you had the right investments in the opportunity to flourish in less materialistic ways.”

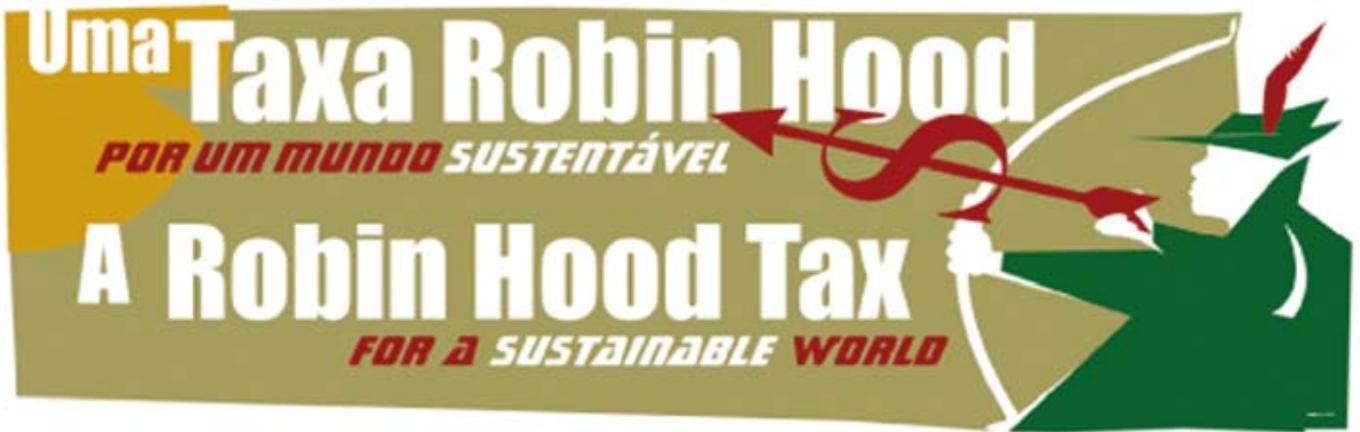
Jackson calls for a society which values more the services delivered in part by public servants, namely healthcare and education, as well as culture. He questions the emphasis placed on labour productivity, saying that we need to create more labour-intensive work and jobs, particularly in the care, education and cultural sectors. He also points to the need to link more closely to money markets and finance. These sectors will require serious pressure to support the types of changes needed toward creating sustainable societies. It is interesting to note here that Greenpeace recently announced that they will focus their campaigning on the financial sector, as it is the ‘power behind the throne’.

Jackson’s approach points to an interesting political option for PSI: to ground our *Quality Public Services-Action Now!* campaign in the language of sustainability and to ally ourselves with organisations which are able to advance the systemic changes which are required.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:** Disseminate relevant analyses; support ITUC in ongoing processes, including development of UN Sustainable Development Goals.

See these analyses: [www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/rio-20-tim-jackson-leaders-green-economy](http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/rio-20-tim-jackson-leaders-green-economy)

and [www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/rio-20-greenpeace-war-finance-sector](http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/rio-20-greenpeace-war-finance-sector)



## A ROBIN HOOD TAX FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD > FTT CAMPAIGN AT RIO+20

A diverse coalition of labour and civil society allies led a global effort to give high profile to the financial transactions tax (also known as the Robin Hood Tax) campaign throughout Rio+20.

The International Trade Union Confederation advanced the financial transaction tax, along with decent green jobs and the Social Protection Floor, as the global trade union movement's top demands at Rio+20. Over 700 international labour delegates participated in discussions and lobbying including through the SustainLabour/ITUC Trade Union Assembly and Major Group (Labour).

It was energising and highly symbolic that the Brazilian bank workers' unions agreed to work with our coalition to launch the FTT campaign in Brazil during Rio+20. PSI affiliate National Nurses United and partners launched the Robin Hood Tax campaign across the United States at the same time.

The well-respected Brazilian Senator Eduardo Suplicy (Workers Party) was so inspired by his participation in our events in Rio that he wore his Robin Hood hat into the senate and delivered a passionate endorsement of the financial transactions tax – linking it to funding for social protection, sustainability, and as a curb on speculation. The senator, who is also an economist, is well-known as the leading proponent of a basic annual income programme. The rally and the Senator's comments received media coverage across Brazil.

*For example:*

<http://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/noticias/depois-de-super-homem-suplicy-encarna-robin-hood/>



Newly elected French President François Hollande also took the opportunity at Rio+20 to address world leaders and emphasise his support for a financial transactions tax. Following Rio+20, IMF references have been made in support of an FTT.

Wearing the bright green Robin Hood hats that have become a popular symbol of this campaign, FTT activists were visible throughout the People’s Summit and Rio+20 official proceedings, handing out information, engaging with media, taking photos, and recruiting new campaign partners.

See colourful photos of supporters: [www.flickr.com/photos/psi\\_isp\\_iska/sets/72157630208662956/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/psi_isp_iska/sets/72157630208662956/)

These actions were part of a series of campaign events envisioned at a strategy meeting co-convened by PSI, our affiliate NNU, the ITUC, Oxfam, Stamp Out Poverty and others in London in January 2012. Leading into Rio+20, the international campaign partners worked to produce ‘myth-busting’ documents, engage in government lobbying, organise a global week of FTT actions, and stage FTT events around the G8 in May, followed by Rio+20 and G20 in June, and the international AIDS conference in July. Along with the partners listed with events below, Rio+20 allies included Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE) and Attac Norway. These efforts are also endorsed by the Council of Global Union’s *Quality Public Services-Action Now!* campaign.



## WORKSHOP 19 JUNE - GLOBAL FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAXES: A FAIR SOLUTION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Bancários union generously hosted our People’s Summit FTT workshop. Discussion underlined our coalition’s key joint messages that world leaders must commit to implement the financial transactions tax to fund decent sustainable jobs, tackle poverty and inequality, advance public services such as health and education, and strengthen global action against climate change. Close to 100 people attended this 2.5 hour seminar which featured presentations from:

- Adriana Nalesso, Acting President, Sindicato dos Bancários do Rio de Janeiro
- Pablo Salon, Director, Focus on the Global South
- Ladislau Dowbar, Economist and Associate Professor, PUC São Paulo
- Alessandra Nilo, Executive Director GESTOS/ LACCASO
- Jean Ross, Co-President, National Nurses United
- Julie Chaverou, Advocacy Officer, Coalition Plus
- Nair Goulart, President, Força Sindical, Brazil and ITUC Deputy President
- Manuel Manonelles, Director, UBUNTU Forum
- Markus Brun, Head of Advocacy, Swiss Lenten Fund/Fastenopfer

See workshop photos at: [www.flickr.com/photos/psi\\_ism\\_iska/sets/72157630492808340/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/psi_ism_iska/sets/72157630492808340/)



## RALLY 19 JUNE - A ROBIN HOOD TAX FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

The Brazilian bank workers' unions co-sponsored the lunch-hour rally in front of the Federal Savings Bank building in Rio's business centre. Union and civil society speakers included: Adriana Nalesso, Acting President, Bancários; Artur Henrique Santos, National President of the Brazilian Trade Union Confederation (CUT); Victor Baez, General Secretary, TUCA; representatives of the Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores do Ramo Financeiro (CONTRAF-CUT); Margarita Lopez, President of SINTRACUAVALLE, on behalf of Public Services International; Alessandra Nilo, Executive Director of GESTOS/LACCASO; and Jean Ross, Co-President, National Nurses United. Senator Eduardo Suplicy gave a great speech and closed the event with a classic song after he was joined on stage by feminist performance artists who offered the memorable slogan "Eat the banks!"

See the short rally video produced by PSI at:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElsUtF5jGQ&list=UU80w-EidMzBJ7mfvWA7WWEA&index=1&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElsUtF5jGQ&list=UU80w-EidMzBJ7mfvWA7WWEA&index=1&feature=plcp)

See rally photos at: [www.flickr.com/photos/psi\\_isp\\_iska/sets/72157630493074974/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/psi_isp_iska/sets/72157630493074974/)



## JOINT DECLARATION TO THE LEADING GROUP

At the close of the official Rio+20 conference, the FTT campaign representatives including from the UBUNTU Forum, wearing the symbolic campaign hats and T-shirts, read out a joint FTT declaration before the Leading Group. Afterwards copies of the declaration were handed to all the Finance Ministers present.

See our final statement with many signatories at: [www.world-psi.org/en/financial-transactions-tax-future-we-want](http://www.world-psi.org/en/financial-transactions-tax-future-we-want)

Learn more about the new US Robin Hood campaign at: <http://robinhoodtax.org/>

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Suggest that global FTT campaign partners approach leading politicians and celebrities, and ask them to wear the Robin Hood hat on a specific day in government/public to promote the FTT demand - for national and international media coverage.
- Our Brazilian partners, including Gestos and the bank workers' unions, have asked for continued support to build the new FTT campaign in Brazil.
- PSI's Canadian affiliates have also indicated interest in building on the US launch of the Robin Hood Tax campaign with parallel initiatives in Canada. PSI will continue to encourage all affiliates to actively engage in the global FTT coalition, as part of the *Quality Public Services-Action Now!* campaign.



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