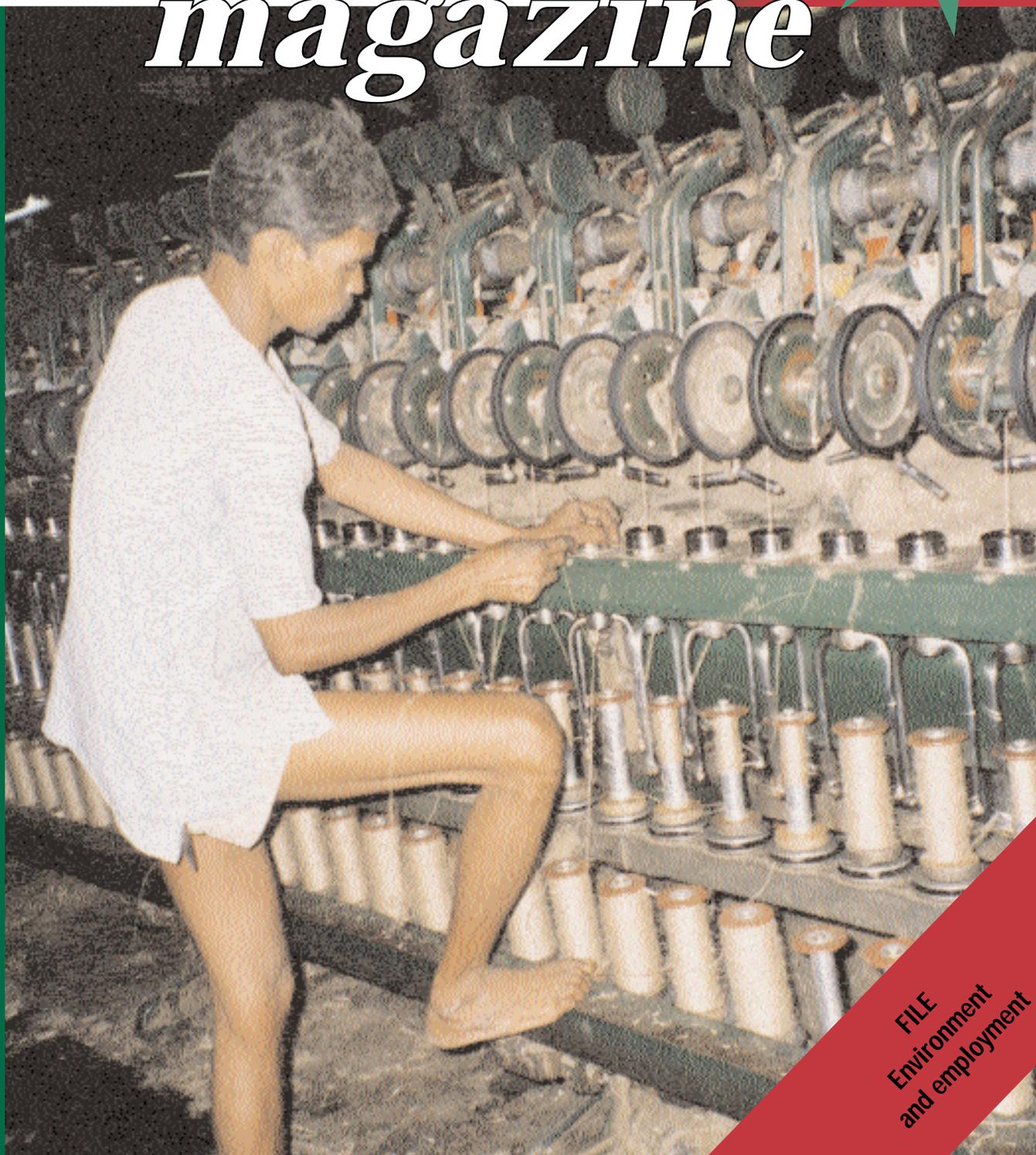


# LABOR

## *magazine*



**FILE**  
Environment  
and employment

80<sup>th</sup> year, number 2002/3

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# PORTRAIT

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## Picture

*Environment et employment, for better or for worse*

### Can you describe the FLATEC?

The FLATEC is represented in 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries, by 27 affiliated teachers' trade unions. It represents teachers of all branches and levels of education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Its principal aims are, for example, to play a role wherever education is discussed in Latin America; to promote the training of its staff, both within the countries and internationally; to promote the development of the Latin American and Caribbean Training Institute



*The new WCL president*

(IPLAC), which is FLATEC's tool for training teachers or ensuring their presence in the struggle for better salaries and working conditions. That is how, in recent years, the FLATEC has organised, in particular, sub-regional training seminars for teachers, courses for professional teacher training or for pro-

CLAUDIO MARCELO CORRIÉS IS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF TEACHERS (WCT) AND CURRENT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE LATIN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE WORKERS (FLATEC). HIS CAREER IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS IMPRESSIVE. FROM 1985, WHEN HE WAS THE NATIONAL SECRETARY AND TREASURER OF THE ARGENTINE UNION OF PRIVATE TEACHERS, TO 2002, HE FOUGHT UNCEASINGLY FOR THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS.

### *Claudio Marcelo Corriés*

motion of international standards, and campaigns against child labour.

**You have been elected President of the WCT. How do you see the future of this organisation?**

The challenge thrown to me by this 8th WCT Congress is to pursue the work of a great President. It is true that it will be difficult to replace Louis Van Beneden, the true promoter and heart of the WCT.

I admire him for his firm positions, his capacity to analyse situations, his understanding of difficulties, in particular those of third world countries, and his devotion to the international trade union cause. I would want to emulate these qualities of his.

A new stage begins. The message of the WCT to teachers' organisations throughout the world is clear: let us look at the problems of the third world.

In a global society, where wealth and power are mainly concentrated in the North, we, the teachers,

have realised that in the peripheral countries we can contribute to the educational and trade union debate, in favour of a more just society, a more equitable society and a more developed society.

It is my responsibility to undertake the process of united action with all teachers in the world. The task is difficult, but not impossible.

The WCT has an excellent working group, with a fighter like Gaston de la Haye and a new Confederal Board which is ready to promote the unity of the teaching staff, with our identity.

I have a passion for this challenge. And all the organisations have decided to grant me this privilege, with the support of the WCL and its organisations.

There is no doubt, however, that the central theme will be the action to demand that education be a political arm of the people in favour of their development.

That may appear tautological, but actually, it is necessary to continually reiterate that without teachers, there is no education. And without a salary, without dignified working conditions, without collective bargaining, without respect for the dignity of the teacher, without participation in decisions, there are no teachers.

**What do you think of the difficult situation in Argentina?**

Argentina has simply shown that, by submitting itself to the decisions of international credit institutions, a country cannot attain its develop-

*Follow on page 23*



# Social development, an goal to be attained!

*It was last June that, in preparation for the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, a trade union meeting was organised by the Labour Congress of Canada. The discussions dealt with development issues concerning Africa and the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The World Confederation of Labour, sensitive to the problem of development, particularly in Africa, sought first of all to stress the fact that the respect of fundamental labour rights within the NEPAD partnership must be an integral part of the development of this initiative. As part of the reduction of the debt of developing countries, we firmly emphasise, as well, the importance of devoting 0.7% of the GNP of rich countries to public development assistance.*

*We need to continue to fight, for trade and opening of markets, are not enough to ensure social development, contrary to what the neo-liberal vision of globalisation defends. How, in the absence of a concrete mechanism for distribution of the wealth produced, could economic growth bring about social development? On the other hand, what is certain, is that the deterioration in the economic situation almost automatically engenders a deterioration in social conditions, an essential factor of development. Social injustice then increases considerably. If, at the G8 level, such a decision could be taken, we would emerge from the speeches and good intentions. Moreover, if the men in high places have to isolate themselves in deserted places like Kananaskis, that still poses a problem of democracy. The fight against terrorism, taking centre stage of news in the troubled period that we are presently experiencing and on the agenda of the G8, although essential, cannot in any way lead to restrictions with regard to democracy and dialogue. It is worth recalling that terrorism is fuelled not only by social injustice, but also the dirty money of tax havens. Moreover, because of these tax havens, the collection of tax by the States and subsequently the redistribution of wealth through social policies is hampered.*

*Finally, in the present circumstances, the World Confederation of Labour again wishes to express its active solidarity with the workers and people of Palestine. It is clear that the day when the United Nations resolutions which state the right of the Palestinian people to a territory and their own State, are respected, we will be able to emerge from the cycle of violence which is affecting innocent citizens in both countries. Then, a just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine can occur and play an important role in contributing to global detente.*



Willy Thys  
Secretary General

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# Middle East, tension still prevails

IN ORDER TO END THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE UNITED STATES CLAIMS IT IS READY TO SUPPORT THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE, BUT ONLY ON THE BASIS OF WIDESPREAD POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS.

In fact as at the time of writing these lines, the American President George W. Bush Junior had just ended a speech which some have been waiting for, for a long time. In the speech, the USA is taking a stand on the situation in Palestine. Even though received positively by the president of the Palestinian authority, who is said to have favourably accepted *"the ideas proposed by Mr Bush in his speech, which could seriously contribute to the relaunching of the peace process"*, the speech remains explicit: *"[...] solid reforms: they will need totally renewed political and economic institutions based on democracy, a market economy and actions against terrorism"*. Under American pressure, legislative and presidential elections will therefore take place in January 2003. Let us remember however, that the current Palestinian authority obtained its status on the basis of a democratic election, and that some do not hesitate to express doubts about the legitimacy of this authority.

## THE POSITION OF TRADE UNIONS

The World Confederation of Labour, on its part, has always been clear and firm on the subject. The military assaults against the Palestinian people, its authority and its representatives are unacceptable in its eyes, just as it strongly condemns terrorist acts which cause the death of innocent people. These military assaults seem to be an integral part of a process of war in order to eradicate terrorism. The pursued aim being to weaken the Palestinian authorities though legitimatised, through democratic elections. Of course we know that it is by negotiating for a more just situation, that terrorism could be really eradicated. It seems, looking at the situation, that the permanent violation of United Nations resolutions is the main source of the violence and suffering of the Palestinian workers and people. In fact it is difficult to imagine peace in the Middle East in these uncertain conditions. For this not to be an utopia, just and sus-





tainable peace should be built by all. Beginning with the international community, which must carry out all the necessary diplomatic actions in order to guarantee an end of the hostilities and the commitment to negotiations aimed at making possible the establishment of the Palestinian state. To guarantee the respect of resolutions, a preponderant factor could be the establishment of an international peace force under the control of the UN. Action strengthened by the International Labour Organisation also seems indispensable for the guarantee of the rights of Palestinian workers.

#### ISRAELI COLONIES

In taking the stand so much expected by the United States, the American President would be taking measures jointly, to end hostilities between Israel and Palestine on its conditions, the withdrawal from territories occupied and the end of colonies.

According to Marwan Bishara, researcher at the School for Higher Studies in Social Sciences in Paris, "*The dynamic and ideology of colonies have become in recent years, the corner stone of modern Israeli identity*" (*Le Monde diplomatique*, June 2002). According to him, "*The greatest obstacle to peace is definitely the existence of colonies. [...] Thirty years of American and European objections have done nothing there; although illegal, they have spread, undermining all attempts at establishing a Palestinian State*". One sees there that the situation is far from clear. One is yet to know if the speech of the American President will be followed in this regard.

#### WORLDWIDE DÉTENTE

More than ever, violence has been renewed, not only in the Middle East, but also in other parts of the world. The perpetual conflict which Israel and Palestine are engaged in no doubt has an influence on the rest of the world. Only just and sustainable peace between these two peoples could play a preponderant role in contributing to worldwide détente and the res-

olution of other conflicts. The World Confederation of Labour has always opposed violence in all forms, be it individual or in group.

In order to eradicate this escalation, it is indispensable to try to build a world order based on peace, solidarity and social justice. To achieve this, the unconditional respect of human rights, and therefore the right of workers is imperative.

MD

#### SOME IMPORTANT DATES

- 1948 Creation of Israel.
- 1967 The six-day war.
- 1969 Yasser Arafat becomes leader of the PLO.
- 1973 The oil crisis, Kippur war.
- 1975 The Lebanon war.
- 1980 The Iran-Iraq war.
- 1987 First Intifada.
- 1991 Gulf war.
- 1993 Oslo Accord.
- 1995 Assassination of Rabin.
- 2001 Failure of Camp David.



# Sustainable development

## ENERGY, A REVEALER

Humanity uses more than 8 billion PET (petroleum equivalent tons) a year. Each North American consumes an average of 8 of it, each Burkinabé 0.1, and each European about 4. Social justice would like an increase in access to energy in countries of the South. But, for each inhabitant to reach the European level of consumption, one must multiply world production of energy by a rate of 8.5 to 10. At what price?

The annual consumption of petroleum alone rises to 3 billion tons. The reasonable estimation of reserves is 300 billion tons. With demographic growth and increase in the standard of living, these reserves will be depleted in less than 100 years, if the modes of production and consumption do not change. That is barely four generations.

The notion of **sustainable development** was defined in 1987 by an international commission chaired by Mrs Brundtland\* as “*development which responds to the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations to respond to theirs.*” A development, which uses natural resources at a rate that does not exceed their restoration. In any case, this rather vague definition is the most commonly accepted among several dozens of others. According to the Commission, sustainable development includes two concerns: that of **needs**, and more particularly essential needs of the most deprived, who must be accorded the greatest priority; and the idea of **limitations**, that the state of our techniques and our social organisation impinge on the capacity of the environment to respond to current and future needs. In other words, all that is technically possible to achieve is not necessarily useful to produce; sometimes it is even the contrary. Sustainable development is therefore opposed to exaggerated productivity, which systematically seeks the growth of production and consumption.

Sustainable development affirms a double solidarity. First of all in space: each inhabitant on this earth has the same right to available resources; then in

time: we have the right to use the resources of the earth but the duty to ensure their sustainability for generations to come.

## A DYNAMIC, EVEN CONFLICTING NOTION

Almost all the current concepts of development agree on its dynamic aspect. This means that one never arrives at the end of the road, but also indicates the existence of “tensions” between different values (see the “energy” box). Two policy choices come into play.

Sustainable development can be conflicting since it integrates the economic, social and ecological dimensions. Its implementation involves taking into account and integrating these three parameters in all decisions, though they can lead to different directions (see file, pages 9-16).

\* *Our Common Future*, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission), 1987.

## SOME KEY DATES

- 1972 The Rome Club, a group of 50 personalities, published *The Limits of Growth*, which observes that by maintaining the trends of this era, the world will be wiped out by the year 2000.
- 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment (Stockholm) and the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- 1980 Brandt Report: *North-South: a programme for survival*.
- 1987 Brundtland Report: *Our Future for all* (in English).
- 1992 Second United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, called the Earth Summit, (Rio de Janeiro). It produced in particular Agenda 21, on measures to take.
- 1993 The International Convention on bio-diversity comes into effect.
- 1997 Signing of Kyoto Protocol on climatic change.
- September 2002 Third United Nations Conference on sustainable development (Johannesburg).



# Serbia: social dialogue institutionalised

The Republic of Serbia, together with the Republic of Montenegro, is an integral part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It has two autonomous provinces, Voivodine and Kosovo. The population of Serbia is very varied, due to often tragic events, which have occurred in this region in the course of history. The Orthodox religion is predominant among the Serbs, although others like the Catholic, Protestant or even Islamic religion are practised.

## INDUSTRY, MINING AND AGRICULTURE

Since the end of the Milosevic dictatorship, the economic situation in Serbia has constantly improved. In fact, inflation, which rose up to 140%, has fallen to 20% in 2002.

696 540 workers are employed in industry and the mining companies. They represent 52% of the total labour force of the country. The small companies employ about 82 000 workers, 147 000 are in the medium enterprises and 458 000 in the large ones.



With regard to the road network, Serbia has 480 423 kilometres (380 kilometres of which are highways) with an estimated value of 17.5 billion dollars. The density of the network is 43.9 km/100km<sup>2</sup>. The road construction sector is considered important with its 23 000 workers.

Another important sector is no doubt the agricultural sector with its 1 305 426 workers. How could it have been otherwise, since most of the country is made up of arable lands (30% of forests)? Serbia has a network of agricultural organisations divided into co-operative farms.

## AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The National Assembly in Serbia is made up of 250 parliamentarians, from several parties, elected for four years. It has constitutional and legislative power. It could be said that in this country, social dialogue is institutionalised since an economic and social council exists which has a consultative status within the Serbian government, and is organised in a tripartite manner: three national trade union confederations (SSS, Nezavistnost, ASNS), employers and the government. The World Confederation of Labour, increasingly active in the countries of the East, has opened dialogue with Serbian trade unions. This is particularly the case with AFITU (Association of Free Independent Trade Unions) or again SSS (Trade union Confederation of Serbia). On this occasion, the WCL participated in the SSS congress in April.

## WHAT ABOUT THE MEDIA?

All the time, hard and authoritarian political regimes imposed control on the media, be it print or other. This is the case of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, where on 15 October 1998, the oldest independent newspaper in the country (*Nasa Borba*) was finally banned. The Serbian parliament has meanwhile adopted a very restrictive law on information, which banned, among others, the retransmission of foreign broadcasts. The owners of media houses are moreover obliged to provide details of their sources of funding and other assistance from abroad to the Ministry of Information.

(tlfq.ulaval.ca).

## THE COUNTRY

**Capital:** Belgrade

**Population:** 10.4 million inhabitants.

**Official language:** Serb.

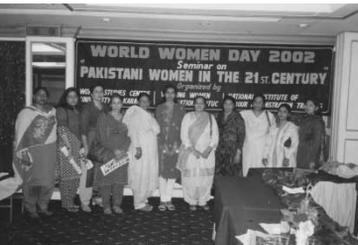
**Majority group:** Serb (62.3%).

**Minority groups:** Albanian, Hungarian, Gipsy, Croat, Slovak, Macadonian, etc.

**Political system:** Yugoslav Republic also comprising the Voivodine and Kosovo provinces (Sources: www.tlfq.ulaval.ca).



8TH USO Confederal Congress



World Day for Women in Pakistan



Juan Somavía (ILO director General) and Willy Thys

## ● INTERNATIONAL 12 June: World Day Against Child Labour

On the occasion of the 90th session of the International Labour Conference, the ILO decided to proclaim the 12th of June "World Day Against Child Labour". The first Day was celebrated on Wednesday 12 June and marked by a series of cultural and artistic manifestations. "*This first World Day Against Child Labour is aimed to remind all of us to what extent the situation remains dramatic and that we must therefore combat – more than ever – this scourge with unfailing energy and determination*", explained Juan Somavía, ILO Director General.

The ILO has several instruments at its disposal to combat child labour: the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). Furthermore, the Focal Programme on Child Labour, implemented by the IPEC, has initiated a series of activities throughout the world. But the task is huge, as Juan Somavía underscored during the celebration: "*We must combine forces to build a world in which each child can live a normal youth, be in good health, go to school, without forgetting the parents who, for their part, must have decent jobs. Our aim is to arrive at a world in which child labour has no right to exist.*"

## ● World Federation of Industry Workers specifies long-term policies

On 9-10 June, the WFIW organised in Elewijt (Belgium) a world seminar in the margin of its World Board meeting. The seminar on "Evolution of International Economic Relations and their Impact on the Workers" allowed a debate on the negative and positive aspects of globalisation. After the lectures by the experts, the participants assembled in workshops and pooled their findings. The conclusions resulted in five long-term lines of force for the WFIW:

- advance and encourage worldwide respect for the code of conduct for multinational companies and for the tripartite ILO declaration on multinational companies;

- examine the theme of sustainable development in co-operation with the WCL and the ILO;
  - analyse the effects of globalisation and protect the public services;
  - advance, with the help of the ILO, a social partnership to protect and/or develop social security systems;
  - advance, with the help of the WCL among others, the trade union views on globalisation and liberalisation at the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO.
- The WFIW elected a new President, Bart Bruggeman, and a new Secretary General, Italo Rodomonti.

## ● Europe workers' rights threatened

In the margin of the European Summit in Seville, the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) met in Brussels on 5 and 6 June 2002; it passed a resolution on the social situation in Europe, establishing that "*the social relations in Europe are deteriorating rapidly. Several governments in the European Union but also in other European countries are attacking the (women) workers' rights in that they proceed to a downward and unilateral revision of the existing laws and protection systems. The employers, for their part, continue to exert pressure to undermine the very structure of collective bargaining*". According to the ETUC, "*it is an illusion to believe that a strong competitiveness of the economy can be attained by reducing the*

*social protection and guarantees*". The ETUC reminds that the consensus on the Lisbon strategy provides for an equilibrium between economic dynamics, better employment and social cohesion. It insists on the fact that "*each reform affecting the working conditions must be the result of collective bargaining and social dialogue*". Within, and outside, the Union, the trade unions do no remain passive observers of this situation. In Spain the trade unions, including the WCL affiliate USO, called a general strike on 20 June last. In Romania Cartel Alfa, affiliated to the WCL and to the ETUC, organised a marathon demonstration to express the discontent of the population at the social and economic situation in Romania.

# ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYMENT: FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?



*The third International Conference on Environment and Development, known as Rio + 10 will take place in September. No one is contesting this basic concern which is the search for sustainable development. But the unanimity reduces when it comes to the practical implementation of such an action. On the labour front, in particular, the concern to protect employment often leads us to view the protection*

*of the environment with some apprehension. It is quite possible that two positive values can contradict each other. Is this the case between the environment and employment? Some specific cases give us that impression. Thus, when it is a question of putting an end to night flights at an airport near a town to control the noise, certain night transport activities may be affected, to the detriment*

*of employment. The same is true for industries that produce non-recyclable products.*

*The following pages show first of all that sustainable development necessarily has a social component and an economic component. Next, that if the pursuit of such a development threatens certain jobs, it can also create as much as it destroys. Employment and environment: a union for better or for worse.*



## SUMMARY

Sustainable development:  
a balance of power

Environment and  
employment: one or the  
other?

Environment and  
employment: same fight

Dossier prepared for  
Labor magazine by  
the Agency InfoSud-Belgium



# Sustainable development: a balance of power

BETWEEN SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ON THE ONE HAND; BETWEEN CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS, HERE AND ELSEWHERE ON THE OTHER HAND; BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE LASTLY: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS A CONFLICTING VENTURE <sup>1</sup>.

Sustainable development rests on three pillars: economic, social and environmental. The first concerns the creation of wealth, through the production and sale of goods and services, and through the distribution of income. The second deals with the distribution of these incomes between social groups, between countries and regions of the world, between groups of people (men/women, generations...). The environmental pillar, finally, refers to the protection of natural resources, not for themselves, but as a living space for human beings. It concerns pollution strictly speaking, the measured or rational utilisation of resources which are renewed slowly, or the living and working environment (noise, mode of travel...).

The implementation of a sustainable development policy implies the consideration and integration of these three parameters (economic, social and ecological) in every decision. The United Nations confirms this: *"If different measures are probably necessary in each region of the world, it still remains that to establish a really sustainable lifestyle, we need to act in an integrated manner on three main fronts: economic growth and equity; conservation of natural resources and environment; and social development."* <sup>2</sup>.

This is easier said than done, because these three points of view can create tension amongst themselves.

Historically, the concern for sustainable development emerged from the economic domain and was aimed at ensuring the sustainability of economic growth by controlling it (Club of Rome, Brandt Commission, see p. 6). The ecologist movement took it over, which gave rise to confusion: sustainable development is still often associated, in people's minds, with ecology more than with economy or social issues.

This is a simplistic view for, like the economy, the ecology cannot exist for itself. The protection of nature cannot be justified only because it serves as a living environment for humans. But it is also a view which has given rise to a number of debates.

## A COMPROMISE

Sustainable development is in fact often perceived as an impediment to "progress", in that it sets limits on production and consumption. In the name of sustainability, it involves the "preservation of reserves" for the future generations, not to go to the limit of available technical capacities. This can be understood on the labour front as a brake on employment and, in the Southern countries of the planet, as an obstacle to development imposed by the industrialised countries which, had already benefited from the development process. The protection of the environment would somewhat be a luxury for the rich.

In 1992, this last tension was apparent during the debates of the Rio de Janeiro Conference. The ideas have evolved since then. The GEO 3<sup>3</sup> report published in May 2002 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) shows that it is the poorest nations which are the most vulnerable to environmental damage: those who have least access to health care, decent housing, decent employment in good working conditions.

The notion of sustainable development then appeared as a sort of historic compromise between the North and South, acceding to two requirements that we have to learn to fulfil together: the right to development and the need to preserve resources in the long term. The option taken at Rio was to *"ensure the progress, at the same time, of the three pillars of society"*: the social, economic and environmental issues.

## THE ECONOMY IS ONLY A MEANS

That's debatable. For Paul Lannoye, author of a report on this topic at the Development and Cooperation Commission of the European Parliament, *"the economic concerns must be subject to the priority objectives which are social and ecological. Obviously, there are three components, but one of them must be at the service of the other two. Since Rio in 1992, the market-centred vision has been dominant, with a small social and environmental*

accompaniment. *That is not sustainable development! There is a sort of perversion of the term, because to put the three aspects on the same footing, is to give prominence to the economy; the economic players being more powerful than the social and environmental players.* “The first requirement is evident to everyone, except perhaps the economists: the economy should be at the service of society and not the reverse”, confirms Christian Comélieu, Professor at the IUD in Geneva<sup>4</sup>.

It is evident that sustainable development is not a largely accepted homogeneous or harmonious idea. Its content and, more so, the manner of putting it into effect gives rise to debates, tensions, power struggles between the players. Arising from a precise international historical and political context, sustainable development is in fact a compromise between three basic contradictions: compromise between the interests of present generations and those of future generations; North/South compromise between the industrialised countries and developing countries; compromise between the needs of human beings and the preservation of ecosystems (the environments and species).

In relation to the dominant model (capitalism), the prospect of sustainable development is, in any case, subversive, in at least three aspects. First, because it gives greater importance to the long term viability over the fulfilment of

short term demands. Next, it favours the world collective dimension over the individual interest, thus refusing the implicit idea of liberalism according to which the sum total of individual interests amounts to the general interest. Lastly, it “internalises” the collective costs. In fact, “the peculiarity of this [capitalist] system is to ignore the social effects of an individual economic decision (household or enterprise)”, explains Denis Clerc in *Déchiffrer l'économie*<sup>5</sup> According to this reasoning, “the automobile manufacturer does not have to worry about the collective effects caused by the use of the automobiles that he sells”, any more than the buyer of a toy does not have to concern himself with the working conditions of those who manufacture it.

Sustainable development does not conflict with economic growth. The Brundtland Report (chap. 2,1) clearly affirms that “to meet the basic needs, it is necessary to achieve full growth potential. [...] Development and economic growth are compatible, on condition that the content of the latter respects the principles of sustainability and non-exploitation of others.”

Nevertheless, if the terms “fulfilment of needs” and “fight against poverty” appear frequently in documents devoted to sustainable development, the word «employment», is more rare. This can be a matter of concern to the trade unions.



1 See also p. 6.

2 Site of the Johannesburg Summit  
<http://www.un.org/french/events/wssd/>

3 *Global Environment Outlook 3*, United Nations Environment Programme, Earthscan publications, London, 424 p.

4 In *Savoirs et jeux d'acteurs pour des développements durables*, Bruylant/L'Harmattan, 2001, p. 49

5. Ed. Syros, Paris, 2001, p. 426



# Environment and employment: one or the other?

WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THERE IS STILL A VAGUENESS BETWEEN CONCERNS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THOSE FOR EMPLOYMENT. SOME CASES ARE SOWING DOUBT. BUT BASICALLY, THE TWO ISSUES AT STAKE DO NOT CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER.

This happened at the beginning of 2000, in a West European country. A rapid courier transport company, whose planes fly by night, came into conflict with the government because it wanted to ban night flights that were too noisy above a certain town. The workers of the company, fearing for their jobs, took the side of the company. The company threatened to move to a less severe country, with a loss of jobs at stake.

Elsewhere, and at another period, workers of factories producing plastic containers protested against a legislation unfavourable to oil-based products. It involved reducing the use of this resource available in limited quantities for the future generations (see boxed text p. 6).

These examples raise a question. A number of measures taken in industrialised countries are the subject of criticism due to their effect on employment. These concern fiscal, social, environmental, health regulations... Often, the workers are not fooled. They know that the companies are looking for maximum profits, and therefore refuse any constraints. Already in the 19th century, it's by the threat of closures that the firms defended the principle of child labour in mines and in the textile industry.

## GROWTH, AT WHAT PRICE?

Yet, if the workers criticise this blackmail at work when it concerns the working conditions, they are much less categorical when it is a matter of defending certain causes outside the company itself. There is reason for doubt, however. In a context characterised by lack of jobs, everywhere in the world, how can it be accepted to voluntarily reduce certain activities at the risk of putting even more jobs in jeopardy?

A preliminary trade union document at the Johannesburg Conference confirms this priority given to employment: *"The creation of decent jobs constitutes an essential factor –and not secondary– of the social dimension of sustainable development, notably concerning the elimination of poverty which is accorded great importance. For the majority of the world population, employment and income which is derived from it constitute the principal means of gaining access to essential goods and services and participating in the economic and social life. The capacity to undertake a decent job must constitute a central objective of any strategy."*<sup>1</sup>.

More and more voices are however contesting the automatic relationship between growth and employment. *"The growth model (Taylorised) and rapidity in the rate [of*

*production] had actually made it possible to both increase the quantities produced and reduce unemployment. It was concluded a little rapidly that there was an inverse link between growth and unemployment"*, writes Denis Clerc<sup>2</sup>. Yet, this is not the case. Growth creates jobs and eliminates others. In 1996, in its annual report on human development, the UNDP noted that growth was now occurring without job creation, literally rendering a large part of the world work force useless.

Moreover, growth at any price, as applied to date, is however not sustainable. Even on the assumption that it resolves quantitatively the problem of employment, we can no longer avoid a number of qualitative issues. The first of these fundamental questions that sustainable development poses to the workers is thus: "What jobs?". The second: "What products, composed of what materials, and for what social purpose?" Next, we need to ask: "What production methods?", a question which covers two aspects: the effect of production methods on working conditions in the enterprise (health, security, hygiene...) and on the external environment (pollution...).

## WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE

These questions may be distressing but all the recent analyses indicate

that they cannot be avoided. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has elaborated different scenarios one of which, entitled “*the markets first*”, shows the effects of the status quo<sup>3</sup>. The conclusion is clear: we have no choice. To maintain the current methods of production would lead to an increase of negative pressures on the air, potable water, the earth, without talking about the excessive use of energy sources which are being reproduced at a slower rate than that of their utilisation. There are many events which have consequences not only on nature, but also, directly on the survival of the human race.

In a report to the European Parliament, the Greek member of parliament Papayannakis takes up the idea by which the current modes of production and consumption are, in the long run, unsustainable. The environmental costs are not taken into consideration in economic activities. It is thus necessary to be able to fix the real price of a product, what it costs the society, reflecting the real social and environmental costs.

“*What is at stake, is the notion of sharing, adds Denis Clerc: whatever our declared intentions and our good will, what we are using today risks being unavailable to others tomorrow. We thus need to limit the*



*Sustainable development: social, economy and environment*

*voracity of our society.” Or still “Our industrial production model is not exportable because it is not based on sustainable development : it uses too many resources and rejects too much waste.”<sup>4</sup>.*

This idea is not well received, because it contains a small dose of injustice to the social groups and peoples of the world. How can it be justified to the unqualified worker that his factory should perhaps reduce production because it consumes too many non renewable materials, whereas he sees his boss flying in a Concorde to New York wasting in a single journey as much energy as an average Frenchman in

a year? How can developing countries accept to halt their access to “progress” in the name of long term survival, whereas the short term is not even assured?

The response is twofold. First it resides in the observation that the worker and developing countries are the first victims of the status quo. Secondly, in the affirmation of alternatives to the industrial west to ensure quality of life, work and well-being. The environment would therefore not conflict with employment, and would even be a factor of decent employment (see p. 14-15).

- 1 Commission on Sustainable Development, Second Preparatory Session 28 January-8 February 2000, Consultative Document emanating from workers and trade union, prepared by the TUAC.
- 2 Denis Clerc, *Déchiffrer l'économie*, Ed. Syros, Paris, 2001, p. 412.
- 3 *Global Environment Outlook 3*, United Nations Environment Programme, Earthscan publications, London, 424 p.
- 4 Denis Clerc, *op. cit.*, p. 421-422.



# Environment and employment: same fight

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS ARE NOT VALID LUXURIES ONLY IN PERIODS OF FULLTIME EMPLOYMENT. WORKERS CAN BE BENEFICIARIES, AND THE TRADE UNIONS ARE EVEN PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THIS RESPECT.

During the IFTUTW Congress, in 1999, there was a small debate on the complementarity between the means of transport of goods. In the face of those who were demanding a revitalisation of rail to the detriment of road transport, the representatives of truckers, defended the maintenance of jobs in their sector.

The example is interesting for the employment-environment debate. It shows first that a favourable measure from one point of view can be disastrous from another viewpoint. Next, that a loss of jobs in one sector can be compensated in another field. That is what the rapporteur of the European Parliament on environmental and development issues, Paul Lannoye (Greens) means, when he asserts: *“it is wrong to completely oppose sustainable development and employment, even if it is true that certain forms of employment are in conflict with the environment in certain sectors, like the nuclear or chlorine industry. Some industrial practices which have created employment are threatened by environmental considerations. On the other hand, these also create many jobs, in the public transport, non chemical agriculture sectors... The new jobs can eventually be filled by the same persons who move into a new type of employment, even if it is not in the same enterprises.”*

A similar reasoning can be held for developing countries. The existence of an industrial enterprise often signifies the abolition of several positions in workshops or the informal sector. To close such an enterprise because it would be harmful to the environment can then reinvigorate other types of employment, as the debate will then move to the area of income and working conditions.

It is however true that to date, it is easier to assess the risks of job losses in sectors harmful to the environment than the expected gains from activities to be developed.

## POLLUTED WORKERS

The environment-employment relationship also comprises qualitative elements for workers, who are often in the forefront of problems of pollution and environment of work stations. In May 2002, the International Labour Office made known a list of industrial illnesses and accidents in the world. It is learned that the most recent estimates of the ILO (2000) assess at *“two million the number of work-related deaths each year –which amounts to over 5 000 deaths a day– and gives the impression that for each mortal accident, there are 500 to 2 000 industrial injuries, according to the type of work, and that, for each occupational disease having*

*led to death, there are 100 other illnesses which compel workers to be absent from work.”*

According to ILO figures, the primary cause of death at the work place is cancer, which kills 640 000 workers a year (32% of victims of industrial accidents or occupational diseases); then come the circulatory diseases, which are responsible for 23% of deaths, then accidents (19%) and transmissible diseases (17%). Asbestos alone causes 100 000 deaths each year.

The ILO also underscores that *“Over half the fatal accidents, injuries and occupational diseases occur in the agricultural sector, which employs more than half of workers in the world. The victims of industrial accidents and occupational diseases are particularly numerous in developing countries where a large number of workers are concentrated in the primary activities and extractive industries like agriculture, woodcutting, fishing and mining – which are among the most dangerous sectors.”*

The WCL had already stressed the insecurity of working conditions in agriculture, in its *2000 Report on the rights of workers*. Aerial spraying of fertilisers or herbicides, as is the common practice, on banana plantations for example, is harmful to the health of the consumer and to the composition of the soil, or, to

the ground water, but first to workers at work on the same plantations.

The protection of the environment is confused here with that of the health and safety of workers, an element of decent work. This is all the more so because the worker is also a consumer of water and fruits, just as he lives in areas that are near factories or airports and uses public transport.

#### ANSWERS ARE AVAILABLE

Far from the fruitless conflict between the protection of employment and that of the environment, organisations seek and find ways of emphasising the two concerns. This is done both by the information of workers and production methods, and even by resorting to new types of production.

*“In all countries, whatever their level of development, the ILO again affirms, a large part of deaths and injuries of which the workers are victims is due to inadequate information on safety and health.”* Their protection can be assured by legal means (such as the Convention 184 on Agriculture, June 2001), as well as by informing workers of the risks to them and to the society. One of these initiatives is the International Chemical Safety Programme, which elaborates, translates and provides clear and standard information on the properties of chemicals at the work place.

There are other initiatives like, in Brazil, a tripartite agreement on the use of benzene, or programmes to gradually abandon the use of asbestos. Or, of a different kind, group transport programmes for workers of an enterprise, or the pro-

vision by the enterprise of bicycles at stations close to the work place.

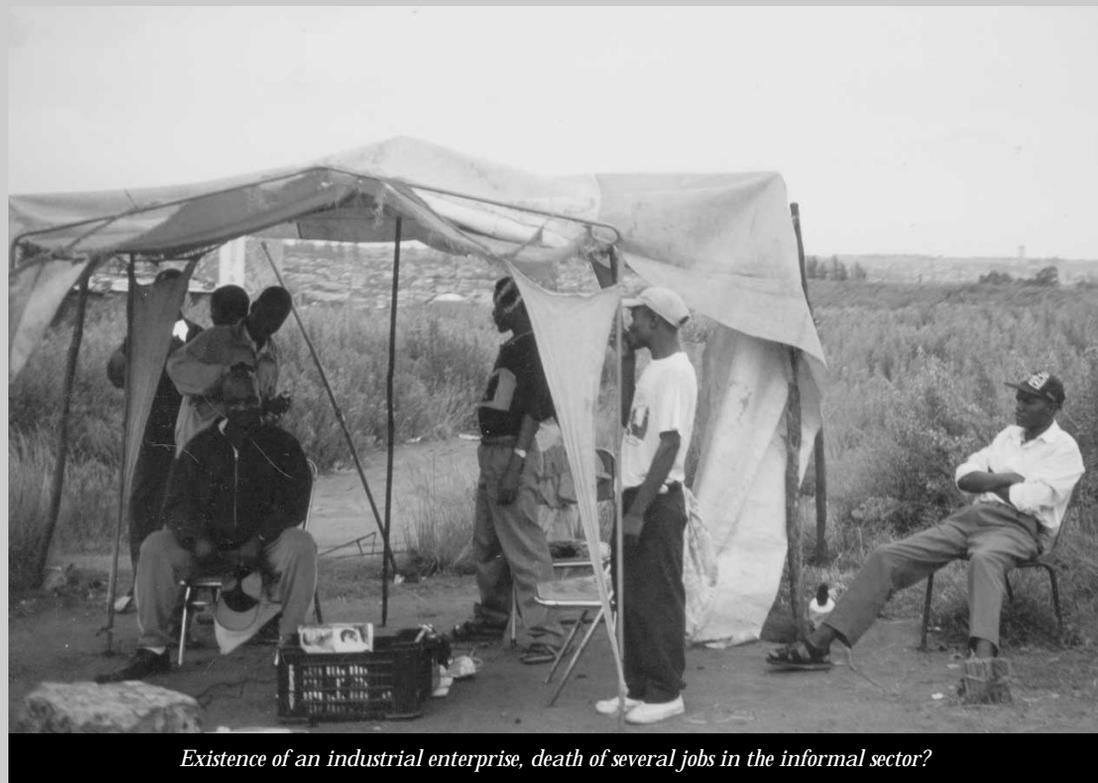
Moreover, certain enterprises have been publishing reports on how they are promoting sustainable development, both internally and externally<sup>2</sup>. It is no doubt necessary to make an effort to ensure trade union participation in these initiatives, as well as verify the unilateral declarations of enterprises, but it is a beginning.

The most pertinent of these initiatives are those related to produc-

tion methods and types of products. Studies are available, like those carried out in Belgium by a trade union organisation called *Travail et environnement (Work and environment)*. The achievements are however quite few.

Embryonic or developed, partial or more extensive, such initiatives show on the one hand that there is still much to be done, but also that it depends on the interest and responsibility of workers.

- 1 Report prepared for the 16th World Congress on Safety and Health at work, being held in Vienna, Austria, from 26 to 31 May 2001.
- 2 See for example <http://www.utopies.com/reporting/utopies.html>
- 3 See the magazine '*Niet in mijn achtertuin*' (Not in my backyard), published by Arbeid en Milieu (Work and Environment), Antwerp, Belgium



*Existence of an industrial enterprise, death of several jobs in the informal sector?*



# The WCL for an ecological GNP

Well before sustainable development entered the scene, the World Confederation of Labour had adopted an original position, by proposing the idea of an “ecological gross national product”. It was in 1992, on the eve of the second United Nations World Conference on Environment and Development, in a document entitled “*For a human ecology*”.

The Gross National Product or GNP, is known as the total of pro-

ductive activities, translated into a monetary value, achieved by the nationals of a country in one year. It constitutes one of the most frequently used development indicators, but presents a number of disadvantages. On the one hand, a number of activities are not taken into account. These are, in general, those that do not give rise to monetary exchange (non-remunerated services...) or which are not recorded in the statistics (a large part of the informal economy, in particular).

On the other hand, no qualitative assessment is made of the activities recorded. In a country where, for instance, road transport is very dense, the calculation of the GNP will benefit positively, even if, in other respects, this activity proves harmful in terms of pollution or accidents. Likewise, programmes designed to control pollution or health care administered after accidents will also be enhanced in the GNP, whereas, quantitatively, they are only used to correct errors. Another example: the arms industry is used in the calculation of the GNP, whatever its consequences on violence in the world.

The reason is simple : the classic statistical calculations externalise the social and ecological costs, in order to limit them to strict economic criteria.

In 1992, the WCL proposed to indicate the “*negative external elements*”, that is to say “*the costs of the development model used in the countries of the South and those of the North alike*”. It would then be necessary to deduct from the classic GNP the costs derived from pollution, road accidents, cardiovascular attacks due to a very rich diet..., in order to arrive at an indicator called ecological GNP. “*This new indicator, wrote the WCL, would help in measuring the real level of development achieved by a country.*”

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## 8th WCT CONGRESS

# The Teacher, education professional, actor of social inclusion

The Congress and consequently the action of the WCT is important in view of the current situation. In fact, globalisation is at the centre of all debates, be it in developed countries or developing countries. The problem is not, of course, globalisation as such but rather the form it takes. That is, an all out globalisation of the economy viewed from the neo-liberal model. Now, we are increasingly witnessing social, ecological and democratic deficiencies. The decisions which affect the majority of the world are taken by multinationals, a few important industrial countries and international organisations like the IMF, WTO or the World Bank. To arrive at a true globalisation with a human face, the role of teachers is essential. Moreover, according to the WCT, it is important that in a globalised society where the powerful and rich are concentrated in the North, teachers play an educative role in favour of a society that is more just and more equitable between the North and South.

### A LOGICAL EVOLUTION IN THE CONGRESS THEMES

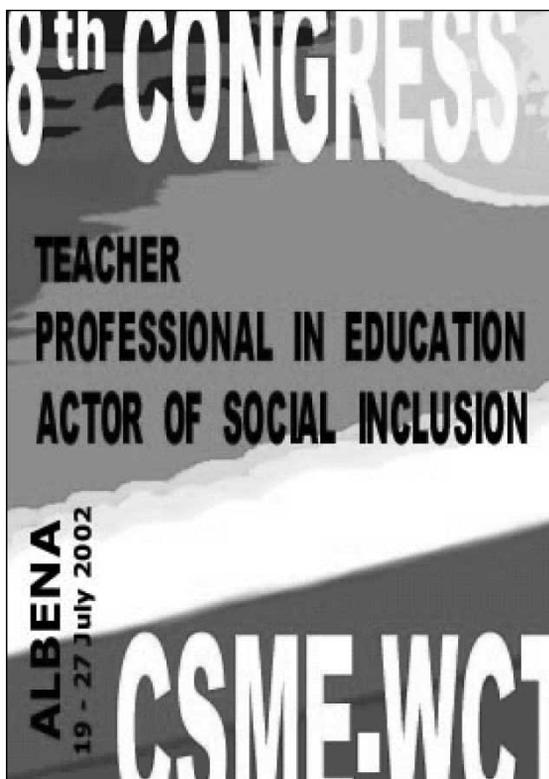
The themes of successive WCT congresses show the confederation's determination to critically follow the developments in the world and evaluate them on the basis of their importance in society. In concrete terms, the conclusions of each congress define the framework of the action programme for the following years. In 1985, the WCT Congress in Nuremberg dealt with the role of education trade union organisations in the changing world. In 1989, in Caracas, it analysed the influence of the world economic crisis on the situation of teachers. Already at that time, the WCT was opposed to the neo-liberal policy which, among other things, under the impulse of the Bretton Wood institutions, the IMF and World Bank, had disastrous consequences on education and teachers in developing countries. As a logical follow up, the 1994 Congress, in Dakar, was interested in the importance of the democratisation

process in developing countries and established that the dynamics of development had to be addressed in its social, cultural, political and philosophical dimensions. Finally, in 1998, in Kuala Lumpur, a report was prepared which strongly underlined the conditions that the teachers had to fulfil in order to meet their obligations.

### THE 2002 CONGRESS, THE TEACHER AS AN ACTOR OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

This year, the WCT Congress, in its concern to ensure the continuity of previous congresses, is putting for-

IT IS IN ALBENA, BULGARIA, THAT THE 8th CONGRESS OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF TEACHERS (WCT) WAS HELD. THE CONGRESS CELEBRATED, IN PARTICULAR, THE ELECTION OF CLAUDIO MARCELO CORRIÉS AS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION (SEE PORTRAIT PAGE 2).





ward the fundamental role of teachers in the abolition of several unjustifiable acts of discrimination in the world via their teaching and national and international trade union action. The WCT is convinced that only a large political vision can lead to the development of a responsible education policy which can contribute to the achievement of a dignified human existence for everyone in the world.

In fact, the world situation is problematic. The inequality between men and women in education, the unequal opportunities of children with special educational needs, the misunderstood role of informal education, the relation between education and the fight against societal problems like AIDS, the search for quality education, the place of teachers in the global knowledge society. Here are some of the problems raised by the Congress. The WCT is ready to meet the challenge.

#### NEW STRATEGIES

First and foremost, it is worth pointing out that the changing role of trade union organisations requires new strategies at all levels (local, national, regional and world). Because of the challenges, the congress re-

quests the international institutions (Bretton Woods Organisations, WHO...) to assume their responsibilities in the fight against exclusion. Next, it is important that the rich countries release financial resources in order to effectively combat the scourges like AIDS, the fight against child labour or even the eradication of poverty.

In order to give priority to social problems, to an education policy rather than military expenditure, the WCT requests developing countries to respect human rights and guarantee the rights of all workers and their organisations. The involvement of teachers' organisations in the programmes of intergovernmental organisations (ILO, UNESCO, World Bank, IMF, UN, ...) which affect education also constitute a priority.

Let us recall, finally, that for a long time there has been a collaborative effort between the WCT and the World Confederation of Labour.

The task will certainly not be easy, but everything should be done to move towards more social justice. One of the essential factors to stop the inequalities is, surely, the promotion of education at all levels.

## Fundamental considerations

In developing its aims, the WCT is guided by the following principles:

- The fundamental rights of men and people, as established in the United Nations basic treaties and conventions, must be respected.
- Insist on the respect of the rights of workers, among others, those stated in the ILO conventions and recommendations, and of UNESCO as concerns education, also means –on the basis of the WCL/WCT Declaration of Principles– to demand respect for their ability as a person in all his dimensions, individual and social, spiritual and material.
- Defend at world, regional and national level, the rights of education staff inevitably linked to the commitment for an effective and quality education, the instrument for the realisation of a more just society with a guarantee of effective development opportunities for all the youth.



# 90th International Labour Conference

## SMALL REMINDER

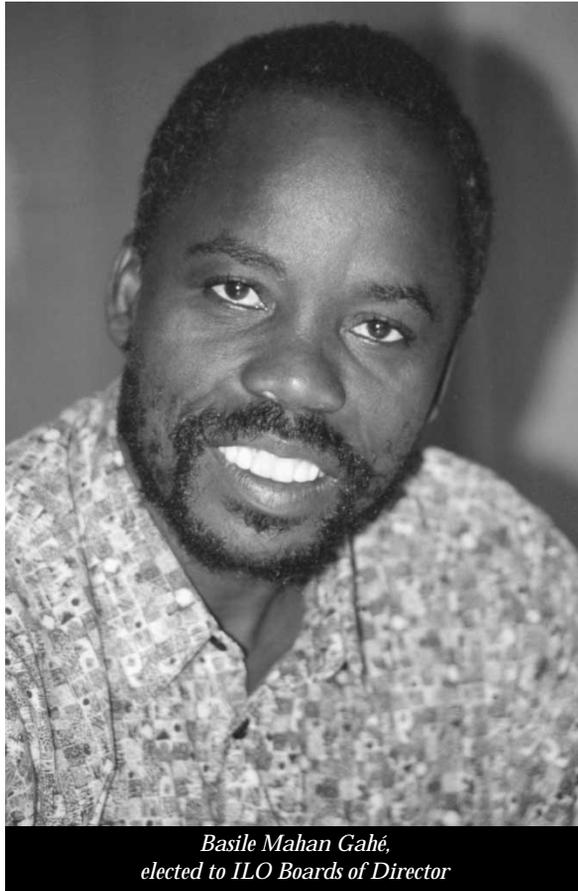
The International Labour Conference is tripartite: governments, employers and workers. Since 1919, it has brought together every year representatives of its 175 member states in joint action for the advancement of social protection and improvement of living and working conditions throughout the world. Between two sessions of the conference, it is the Governing Body that guides the work of the ILO. It comprises 28 representatives of governments, 14 workers' representatives (Basile Mahan Gahé, President of the WCL, was elected this year) and 14 representatives of employers. The fundamental role of the Conference is to adopt international labour standards, and to see to their application.

## DIFFERENT THEMES

Like every year, an impressive number of delegates and journalists cross paths in different commissions. Like every year, some are lost in the maze of the corridors of the *Palais des Nations unies* and the ILO. Fortunately, the debates took place all right. In this instance, the Conference took interest in several different themes. According to Juan Somavía, Director General of the International Labour Office, the conference was “*exceptionally rich*”, especially with regard to child labour and globalisation. “*In so far as globalisation will not give priority to the creation of employment and the reduction of poverty*”, affirms Somavía, “*the concept in its entirety will remain characterised by controversy and divisions. Decent work for all... is the best way to eradi-*

THE 90th INTERNATIONAL  
LABOUR CONFERENCE  
WAS HELD IN GENEVA FROM  
3 TO 20 JUNE 2002 UNDER  
THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF  
MR JEAN-JACQUES ELMIGER,  
SECRETARY OF STATE AT THE  
SWISS FEDERAL MINISTRY  
OF ECONOMY, FORMER  
MEMBER OF THE ILO.





Basile Mahan Gahé,  
elected to ILO Boards of Director

*cate poverty and give anchorage for the security of the family, an essential condition for the existence of peaceful communities. We must do more and better". With regard to implementing the 2000-2001 report of activities, the Director General of the ILO declared that delegates urged the ILO "to fix more rigorous performance indicators according to the needs of members Organisations and to be more aggressive in the manner of evaluating its interventions to address the lack of decent work in a world in the process of globalisation".*

There were of course debates on the situation in the occupied Arab territories. In his intervention on this subject in the plenary session, Willy Thys, Secretary General of the World Confederation of Labour declared that, "the WCL expresses its solidarity with the workers and people of Palestine, it condemns military assaults against them, and finds unacceptable the acts of terrorism which bring about the death of innocent persons". He added "the observation of United Nations resolutions could play an important role in the fight for just and sustainable peace between Palestine and Israel." During the Conference, commitments were made to

support ILO efforts to encourage the creation of employment in the region and the opening of dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis.

#### THE INFORMAL SECTOR OR ECONOMY

A theme that brought about lengthy discussions was no doubt that relating to the informal economy or the sector. Myriam Liz Triana Alvis (General Trade Union of Democratic Workers) participated actively in it, since she was appointed member of the editorial group for the workers' group. The informal sector is also the theme of the annual report of the WCL on the workers' rights. At the national and the regional level, WCL affiliates implemented strategies and instruments enabling them to tackle problems of workers in this sector. Well before the conference, the WCL had already stated the role that the ILO must play with regard to the informal sector. According to the WCL, "it is important that the ILO sees to it that the working conditions in the informal economy are duly regularised. Governments must be encouraged to establish a legislative framework for the informal economy, including even civil rights, working rights and social rights, and facilitate access of these workers to systems of social protection. The ILO must see to it that the recommendations and conventions ratified by member states and on workers' rights in the informal economy are duly applied. It must also see to it that national governments ratify and apply the conventions." In conclusion, the ILO Conference declared the launching of a new ILO programme centred on the creation of employment, social protection and reduction of poverty in the informal economy. This new programme should extend to those who do not enjoy the rights and benefits of labour standards and of the global economy.

#### PROMOTION OF CO-OPERATIVES AND ACCIDENTS AT WORK

The point entitled "Promotion of co-operatives", was the object of an initial discussion on the revision of the Recommendation on co-operatives during the 89th session of the International Labour Conference (2001). This theme was discussed a second time this year, in the presence of Rabitatu Dialo, Secretary General of the CNTG, National Confederation of Workers of Guinea, and Chairwoman of the World Women's Committee of the WCL. In conclusion, the Conference adopted a recommendation on the subject,



which replaces No. 127 of 1966. It requests members of the organisation to adopt specific measures to promote co-operatives in all countries so as to create employment, develop its businesses, increase saving and investments, and improve social welfare.

With regard to accidents at work and occupational diseases, the Conference adopted a recommendation which suggested to member countries to establish a national list of occupational diseases in order to prevent them, as well as a protocol for countries which desire to ratify it and invited them to “establish and re-examine periodically the prescription and procedures for the registration of accidents at work, occupational diseases and, if this occurs, the dangerous events and accidents in travelling.”

#### A STRENGTHENED STANDARD-SETTING SYSTEM

The Commission for the application of standards, in spite of the opening of a liaison office of the Organisation in Rangoon in Myanmar, observed that forced labour still exists in the country. Other cases were of course examined, but it was mainly the Sudan, Ethiopia and Venezuela which attracted attention. In the case of the Sudan, it is the non-observance of Convention No. 29 on forced labour as well as the problems relating to abduction and trafficking in women and children which is part of the leading trio. Concerning Ethiopia, fingers were pointed at it for its attitude to Convention 87 on trade union freedom and protection of trade union rights. Despite all this, the Ethiopian government is to receive technical assistance from the Organisation, which was favourably received by the commission. With regard to Venezuela, it was also the problems relating to Convention 87 which was on the agenda.

The World Confederation of Labour, on its part, expressed its view for a modern and strengthened ILO standard-setting system. In fact, international labour standards constitute the only existing form of international

social legislation to date. For application, legislation must be the object of monitoring, which could lead to possible sanctions. Meanwhile, the ILO conventions, even when ratified are not always applied. This is the reason why the Standards Committee exists and plays this role of monitoring and sanctioning. As far as the WCL is concerned, the most adequate means of eradicating poverty is to promote decent work for all. It is clear that without the respect of international standards, decent work cannot exist. The WCL has always been very committed to the ILO standard-setting process. It moreover agrees with the position of the working group which affirms that no confidence can exist in the revision of the standards system of the ILO in so long as the three groups, government, employers and workers have not made a joint commitment with the view to improving the standardisation activities of the ILO, not to weaken them. It appears however, that we are still far from this commitment considering the position of employers and certain governments.



The Palais des Nations unies



## PRESS REVIEW

### REFLECTION ON WORLD GOVERNANCE

[...] The ILO clearly has an ambition and a method: to be a major think-tank organisation on world governance. [...] Larry Kholer, advisor to Mr Somavia and ILO representative at the preparatory meetings for Johannesburg says, “*The issue of employment should be pursued. One must get out of the logic where social issues are systematically seen in terms of cost*”. Logically enough [...] the ILO is also among the organisations very critical of the IMF and its management of the Asian crisis, in particular. “*If social protection, including that of employment, had been stronger, the crisis would have been less severe*”, thinks Gerry Rodgers, director of the department of policy integration. “*Last year, Horst Köhler, managing director of IMF said publicly that anyone having read the eight fundamental conventions of the ILO could not be against them. It is favourable for the integration of fundamental principles and social rights in the work of the IMF.*” What remains is the method. This is where the ILO will make its difference understood: tripartism. In other words, the systematic joint management of policies and programmes by local authorities, trade unions and enterprises. As far as Mr Köhler is concerned, the step is also valid for the environment. “*To put in place new technologies (respecting the environment), there should be social dialogue. This is well and good, since for eighty years, social dialogue has been both the trademark and the raison d'être of the ILO!*”

Extracts from an article by Florence Autret, *ILO: reinventing globalisation*, in *Le Monde Initiatives*, June 2002.

### • THE HUMAN COST OF FOOTBALL

[...] A pair of Nike or Adidas shoes cost about 100 euros, on the average. One immediately notices the gap between what the company spends on advertising and sponsoring, and what it pays for salaries: the smallest share of the cake is that of salaries, namely 0.4%. Nike is obviously very generous to its teams and players since it gave 1 630 000 euros to Ronaldo and also 24 780 000 euros to the golfer Tiger Woods. Adidas does not lag behind. The partnership concluded with the French team allowed the three-stripe brand to increase its turnover by 48%, after the 1998 World Cup victory. On the contrary, salaries that the producers of sporting equipment receive are still so low... At stake is subcontracting, to which the two heavy weights of the sector resort to.

Brian May, *Libertés* Nr. 385, June 2002.

### • GENDER INEQUALITY STILL PRESENT

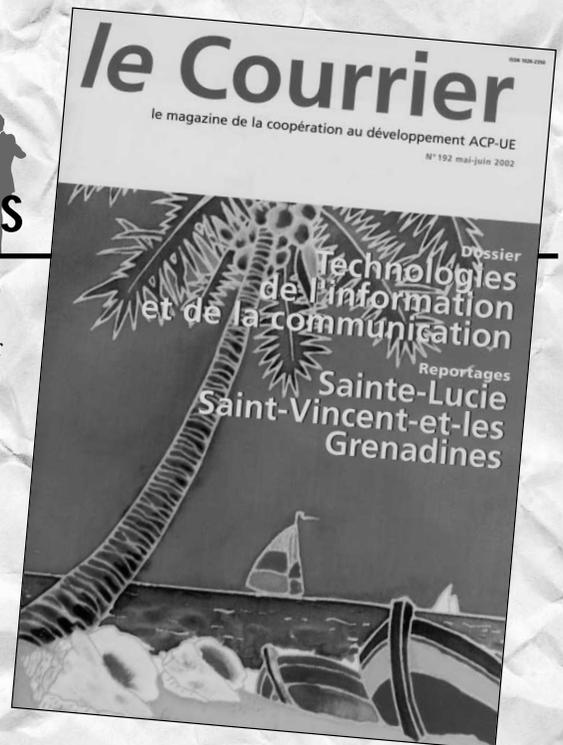
[...] *Gender inequality is one of the most specific, and it “cuts across” all countries, even the most advanced and the most proud of their achievement in this area. Contrary to a number of ideas received, progress in gender equality does not always depend on the wealth of a country, not even – what is the most surprising at a first look – the level of what the UNDP calls “human development”.* It is first of all a matter of the concept of development, of political will, of cultural evolution and the commitment of the whole of society. [...] Poverty affects first and foremost women: 70% of persons living in absolute poverty are in fact women and the number of women hit by poverty in the rural area has almost doubled in twenty years' time. In the area of work, improvement in training of women has not yet translated into income, effective equality of rights and social recognition.

*Le nouveau courrier of Unesco*, May 2000.

## BOOKS AND DISCUSSIONS

### LE COURRIER

“Le Courrier”, the magazine on co-operation for ACP-EU development, in its May-June edition proposes a dossier on Information and Communication Technologies. The dossier concretely relates to us how countries in the South are lagging behind with regard to communication and dissemination of information, the place of African women in communication and also the advantage of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) for small insular communities. Complete, this true working tool shows us that ICT occupies an important place in the speeches of the international community on economic and social development.



# PORTRAIT

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Claudio Corriés: *Workers demand unity, solidarity, organisation*

ment, promote justice, or contribute to the well-being of its people. In 1994, Argentina was invited to the Davos forum as an “example” of a nation respecting the standards of the IMF to the letter. Barely seven years later, these same people are amazed at the conduct of their disciples, without even being ashamed, as if they were blameless. But the guilt is shared between these “wise men” from the North, the true cause of this disaster, and their industrious “disciples” from the South. The Argentinean people have said “Enough!”, in the manner the people know best. “No one is in less of a hurry than a people developing its history” –said a Latin American poet. And the Argentinean people have reconciled with themselves, with their identity and truth. We can then expect much from them.

Argentina cannot but be one country or then be again one Nation. Someone has said “The people are like water, they always get through. Put an obstacle in their way, a wall, a barrier, they always end up overflowing and getting through”.

Argentina will resume the course decided by its people, with its leaders at the head, or with the head of its leaders. There has been too much blood spilled, too much effort made, too much hunger in a rich country. And great efforts and much work still remain to be done.

## How can greater importance be given to trade unions in Latin America?

In principle, there is need to redefine the ideological and political struggle, strengthen the training of leaders, democratise the organisations and favour the participation of the youth. And this will not be the work of a few enlightened persons, but rather the political will of workers.

The Latin American trade union movement is faced with a dilemma: to opt for the convenient proposals of alignment with the United States and their devastating FTAA, or favour the more difficult way towards the Latin American Community of Nations, an idea born within the CLAT, on the initiative of our comrade Emilio Máspero, well alive in the heart of Latin American workers. This idea is taken up again in a new CLAT proposal, which marks out the course of action of an ideological and political nature.

Do you believe that the unions have an important role to play in this period of globalisation?

In this globalised world the trade unions are becoming increasingly important. It is not by chance if neo-liberalism has chosen them as enemies. With powerful and democratic trade unions, with workers represented by

capable and honest leaders, with public mobilisation, with solid structures and trade union unity, this savage model has no chance of success. And the supporters of the model are well aware of this. Besides, it is revealing to see that many organisations, either by ignorance, or by connivance, fall into the trap of the enemy. Only the unity of the workers Movement can contribute to an alternative model.

But this unity cannot be the result of a high level agreement, nor that of submission to a sole line of thinking. The workers, and they alone, have the wisdom to show us the way. A few days ago, a teacher was telling me: “The doubt can assail you on the way, but in the face of doubt, there is a single question : what do workers want?” This simple question is actually the key for the trade union movement.

What do workers want? They want unity, solidarity, organisation.

MD

# trade union activities

## MOROCCO

# Difficult working conditions for railway workers

In Morocco, the UGTM (General Workers Union of Morocco) and the CDT (Democratic Labour Confederation), the two unions affiliated to the World Confederation of Labour, have been fighting for a long time to defend the interests of social sectors like education, public health or postal service.

The CDT, founded in 1978 and now well-established in the private sector, has always been highly influential in the public sector. Since its establishment, it has been fighting against corruption, for respect of trade union freedom and against the dependence of the country on external forces like the International Monetary Fund. As regards the UGTM, it was established in 1960. Although it too has members in the private and public sector, this trade union is mainly composed of workers of the agricultural sector. In 1998, the UGTM opened a research and training centre in Rabat. In fact, *“the training of staff”*, according to Abderrazzaq Afilal, the UGTM Secretary General, *“is a priority for our union. Moreover, we want to organise the sectors locally and regionally before doing it at national level. We will then be able to defend the rights of workers more effectively, and be closer to them.”* The same position has been adopted with regard to strikes, since the UGTM prefers to embark on sectoral rather than general strikes. The UGTM, which has already been working for a long time with the World Confederation of Labour, is determined to go all the way to succeed. One of the principal claims of the Moroccan trade union is to obtain a wider health insurance cover. According to the UGTM, this cover is indispensable for the well-being of workers. What is more, about half of the salary is taxed. That is far too much in the opinion of the UGM which emphasises the importance of a better salary policy at government level.

## BELGIAN-MOROCCAN CO-OPERATION IN RAIL SECTOR

The Minister of Transport and Merchant Navy Abdessalam Znined, and the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Mobility and Transport, Mrs Isabelle Durant, have both signed a declaration in which they undertake to encourage the exchange of experiences, information and specialities in the field of transport (FNC on line: [www.webzinemaker.com](http://www.webzinemaker.com)).

The promotion of joint activities and partnerships with international organisations is also included in this declaration. That in any case is an initiative which should be of particular interest to the country's trade unions. According to the document *“the co-operation between the two countries deals with four major issues, namely, the reduction in the environmental impact of transport, the general improvement of security and safety of different modes of transport, the development of regulations making it possible to prepare and open the sector to competition as well as the development of quality and services offered to users”*. We will see, in the long run, the results of this desire for closer cooperation between the two countries. But according to the FNC, a trade union affiliated to the UGTM, the problems linked to salary are so serious that they overshadow the environmental problems. In their view, the train is an environment-friendly means of transport where the risks of accidents are small. On the other hand, the FNC-UGTM insists that the basic salary of railwaymen as well as the working conditions leave something to be desired.

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*Co-operation in the railway sector*