TELE-FLASH
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WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On this symbolic day, the World Confederation of Labour owes it to itself to take stock of the ground covered by women in terms of acquired rights, the respect and application of these rights and equality between men and women.
From this inventory, it follows that poverty has not reduced, on the contrary, women make up the majority most affected by this phenomenon; one of the direct consequences of the poverty of women is the increase in child labour. Some rights acquired by women are still not applied and are even often inapplicable. As a matter of fact, many States have still not ratified the fundamental conventions of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) on non-discrimination, No.100 and 101. We must add that Convention 183 on maternity protection has been ratified by only four countries, nearly three years after its adoption. It is important that the situation changes, that these basic safety nets no longer fail.
Fortunately, this observation does not disarm women. Throughout the world, they act and struggle to build a better world. The WCL is keen to honour the struggle by women in the world. The WCL is convinced that the participation of women in decision-making geared towards policies which govern us is imperative if one wants justice and democracy to be the unifying thread in the functioning of our organisations and our societies.

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ECHOES OF THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE WORLD

This International Women's Day is the occasion to get a general view of the different continents in order to gain better understanding of the situation of working women throughout the world.

WHAT PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN WOMEN?

More than 40 years after political independence, the question of the development of Africa is, no doubt, the most difficult equation to solve. It is from this observation that the idea of NEPAD was born. We recall that NEPAD is a partnership for the development of Africa, adopted by the G8 – the most powerful countries. It is a good idea, but according to Colette Aguemon, technical Co-ordinator, in charge of women's affairs at DOAWTU, the reality is that after studies, women are not considered in the concerns of NEPAD.*«NEPAD repeats past errors by remaining silent over the devastating effects of structural adjustment programmes of the past decades, under which, women were the first to pay a heavy cost»*, she declares. *«The gender concept is almost absent from this new partnership, which is NEPAD. The differing analysis according to sex does not cut across it. To put the woman outside this process is to deprive oneself of the contribution of a no less negligible fringe of society and choose the path of failure».*

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

For the WCL women from Central and Eastern Europe, the International Women's Day is the occasion to remind themselves of and to celebrate the progress achieved until now to re-establish equality among men and women. Let us remember also that the fight is not over. In Poland, for example, whilst the Constitution states that men and women are equal, there are cases of discrimination in the laws everywhere (especially at the level of allowances). The joy of celebration must not make us forget the threat of war either, which is still in the offing today. The International Women's Day is the occasion to launch an appeal to all men and women in the world to unite against war.

THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN, A VITAL ISSUE FOR THE CLAT

For the CLAT (regional WCL Organisation for Latin America), the active and militant integration of women and young workers is a vital issue for the workers' movement *«the success of struggles and actions of the trade union movement depends on its capability to build a social power and create a new power relationship. The active and quantitative participation of women in the dynamics of these actions is indispensable to respond to the new challenges of the globalised society».* Within the CLAT, the CLAMT (Latin American Committee on Working women), contributes significantly to understanding and giving responses to the often difficult situation of working women. Let us remember that the 27th Latin American Council, held last January, has called for the next CLAT Congress in November 2004, in Brazil and has included women in the organising committee, in the new subject committees and in all delegations of the CLAT Congress.

A CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVES IN THE ORGANISATION OF WORKING WOMEN WITHIN BATU

The national organisations of BATU (*Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists*), the regional Asian organisation of the WCL, is increasingly involving itself in organising working women within sectors such as textile, agriculture, services or the informal sector. Thus the defence of women's rights, the protection of women against discrimination, repression and exploitation, introduction of women into trade unions, including those from the informal sector or yet still the promotion of their participation in the decision making process is becoming increasingly possible. Specific programmes have been put in place, and results achieved so far are up to expectation. We point out, among others, the fact that two trade unions have been introduced in the textile businesses in Malaysia and the working women's organisation in the informal sector, migrant workers and prostitutes in South Korea.

WCT ACTION

During its 8th World Congress at Albena, the WCT (World Confederation of Teachers) stressed the need to focus their activities on the education of girls and on the essential role of women in education and education trade unions.

From 8th March the complete report of the World Women's Conference in Education, organised by the WCT, will be available on CD Rom in English, French and Spanish.

The WCT has made an appeal to all its member organisations to strengthen the commitment to put into practice its resolution on equal opportunities and to turn it into actions. This initiative, we can be certain, will give a new boost to the integration of girls and women in education and education trade unions.

SIGNS OF HOPE APPEAR ...

In conclusion, the WCL would like to recall that the struggle is not over. Violence towards women is a universal phenomenon. Sexual and moral harassment, maltreatment and intimidation are common. However, signs of hope are emerging. Especially within WCL organisations, where policies concerning equality are being put in place to defend the rights of women.

Women workers say NO to war on Iraq

· We, the women, do not share the aggressive convictions of some countries that trample underfoot the elementary rules of justice and decisions of international institutions created, in principle, to guarantee peace and security.

· We, the women, standing surety only for women and children, again pay the very heavy cost of a conflict, which we have neither chosen, requested nor provoked.

· We, the women, are aware that Iraq, like Afghanistan are of interest only basically because of economic and strategic reasons.

· We, the women, are aware also that high technology armaments will be taken out on a population starved and weakened by twelve long years of embargo dictated by the West.

· We, the women, do not believe in the humanist fervour of some political leaders who claim to protect the whole world from the Iraqi danger and liberate a people from dictatorship but who, at the same time, give their blessings to other tyrants.

· We, the women, do not accept a policy that varies according to circumstances, which once again, is driving Europe to show lack of political maturity and Arab countries not to lift a finger to protect the sovereignty of a brother country.

· So, women unionists throughout the world say NO to war! Definitely NO!

Women trade unionists throughout the world, just like their organisation, the WCL, condemn all violence, wars, dictatorships and defend peace as the fruit of development, justice and democracy.