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WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR

8 MARCH, INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On the occasion of International Women's Day, on 8 March, the World Confederation of Labour would like to join in the launch of the World Charter of Women for Humanity, which starts its relay on 8 March in Brazil and ends on 17 October in Burkina Faso.

The World March of Women is a movement that unites nearly 6,000 women's groups from 163 countries and territories worldwide. Its main goal is the struggle against poverty and violence against women. The World Confederation of Labour, which is also active on these issues, entirely shares this goal.

An action on the move

The least one can say is that the World March of Women did not stop in 2000. It is permanently on the move through actions of grassroots and national coordination groups. There is also a rationale for international actions because the March is part of a large movement that struggles for another globalisation. The March is active within the World Social Forum and helps build the Network of social movements. Among other actions figure the struggle against the World Trade Organisation and the power of the transnational companies, against the free trade agreements and for the cancellation of the debt of the poor countries. Through these actions the World March of Women hopes to change the lives of women. That is why the movements constituting the March work out alternative solutions and struggle against the merchandisation of life.

Situation of women worldwide

It is a harsh observation but the condition of women worldwide is still problematic in a lot of regards, notwithstanding some meaningful progress. Exploitation at work, feminisation of poverty… Let us not forget that nearly 80% of the informal economy workers are women! Another aspect of the March's struggle is the demand that governments and international institutions act to prevent sexual violence in armed conflicts and that women are involved in the peace building processes. And the struggle includes, further, the availability of public health services, food security, wage equity, right to education for all girls and the participation of women in the decision-making bodies. This is obviously not an easy task. It will not be accomplished without the globalisation of solidarity, a common will and cooperation.

World Charter of Women for Humanity

On 10 December 2004, the delegates of the World March of Women met in Kigali, in Rwanda. There they adopted the World Charter of Women for Humanity. The Charter resulted from lengthy consultations and exchanges between women from around sixty countries. The national, regional and continental coordination groups strengthened themselves with statements and demands in line with their realities and with the way they are organised.

Why the march?

The human rights of women are guaranteed by a lot of international texts (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Maternity Protection Convention…). Unfortunately, these texts do not question the very foundations of the exploitation and oppression systems. They do not guarantee the application of a new society project. The Charter proposes building a world that is free from exploitation, oppression,

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intolerance and exclusion. A world in which integrity, diversity and the rights and freedoms of all are respected, a world based on the values all women believe in: freedom, equality, solidarity, justice, peace. "*No value can be singled out*", declares Rosa, a Peruvian delegate, on the website of the World March. "*These values are necessary for the society we want to build, we are already building. They are related to important themes for the women in Peru and in the world. We are very sensitive to issues like violence against women and the struggle against poverty, but we are also attached to themes like peace, justice and equity.*"
For the complete of the Charter: www.cmt-wcl.org

2005, a series of sensitisation actions

In order to spread the Charter as widely as possible, the World March of Women intends to bring it symbolically from one country to the other by means of significant actions. This initiative will start on 8 March in Sao Paulo, in Brazil, and end on 17 October in Burkina Faso with the World Day of Female Solidarity. More than fifty countries in all the continents will take part in this action. "*During the relay*", explains the March, "*women will take sensitisation and information actions on the content of the Charter, addressing their representatives and public opinion. They will also transpose the content of the Charter in patchwork squares that will be made as the action progresses.*" Of course, 17 October will not be the end of the actions of the World March of Women. After a brief break, the activities will be resumed even more intensively. **For the complete list of relays or "*focal points*"**: www.worldmarchofwomen.org

Position of WCL

The World Confederation of Labour has been a member of the World March of Women ever since its creation. It took an active part in the March of the year 2000. Through its Equality Department, WCL follows closely the activities of the March, mobilising all its affiliates to spread the spirit and to take concrete action upon the demands of the political platform of the World March. The action in favour of women is a priority of WCL. One example is wage equity, a basic right, as states ILO in its Declaration on the basic principles and rights at work. The absence of sensitivity to and understanding for gender-based wage discrimination impedes the achievement of wage equity considerably. At its latest Congress WCL drew up a plan of action for the period 2001-2005. The integration of the gender perspective in the trade union policies and the strengthening of the participation of women are part and parcel of this plan of action. Since that Congress a lot of follow-up activities have seen the light of day. WCL, which actively promotes gender equality, is convinced that the actions of the World March of Women are essential for the realisation of this equality.

THE WORLD CHARTER OF WOMEN FOR HUMANITY DENOUNCES:

- the transnational societies, the large landowners, the banks and the financial circles, which make the economy the centre of everything;
- the enforcement of SAPs upon the poor countries, which augments the debt and finds expression in the impoverishment of the populations;
- the wars and armed conflicts, which benefit the arms industry while decimating and impoverishing the populations and generating hate and terrorism;
- all forms of violence against women;
- religious fundamentalism of any nature, which convey intolerance towards cultural, sexual, religious and opinion diversity;
- the corruption of certain governments.