



**PORTO ALEGRE: STRONG TRADE UNION PRESENCE**

With 60,000 participants from 130 countries, 5,000 NGOs and trade unions represented, 700 workshops, 100 seminars and 28 conferences, the second edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) was a success. It also gained credibility among the worldwide public opinion and the actors of the World Economic Forum.

This 2002 edition was marked by a stronger trade union presence, which found expression in a joint WCL-ETUC-Global Unions (the former international trade secretariats in the ICFTU) declaration both to the WSF and to the WEF. The declaration was a plea for the globalisation of social justice.

The international trade union movement marked its presence by means of several joint WCL-ICFTU activities, which met with a favourable reception from the NGOs.

The fact of staging a Trade Union Forum was a joint initiative of the WCL and the CLAT, the ICFTU and the ORIT, and the ETUC. During this Forum Willy Thys, secretary-general of the WCL, stated that it was necessary *«to strengthen the trade union solidarity and to establish alliances with the other actors of the civil society.»* Basile Mahan Gahé, president of the WCL, pointed out the conditions of poverty in several African regions and launched the idea of organising a world march against the debt.

The seminar on decent work, under the patronage of the ILO, allowed Juan Somavia, director-general of the International Labour Organisation – ILO, to deliver a remarkable address. *«The ILO is an organisation in which the trade unions have a voice and an authority»*, he stated; *«together we must struggle for the globalisation of social justice.»*

The participants in the WSF reached a consensus on the criticism of the neo-liberal model and on the need to search credible alternatives. The Forum's challenge in the coming years will be to find a working method, to achieve national and international alliances in the field and to define lines of action and international mobilisation so that the hope of a "new world" does not remain an idle fancy.

**WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM**

For the first time the WCL was invited to take part in the World Economic Forum (WEF). For the secretary-general of the WCL it was an occasion to meet leaders of the ICFTU and the Global Unions (the former international trade secretariats of the ICFTU), but also Mary Robinson, United Nations high commissioner

for Human Rights, Juan Somavia, director-general of the ILO, and James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank. Willy Thys took part in a discussion group on the creation of a "worldwide social investment market" aimed to favour private investments in social development projects. He pointed out that *"even if the companies can play a role in development projects, one must not forget the importance of the role of the state. What we ask of the companies is not to add to the existing problems and to meet, for instance, their tax obligations in the countries in which they are active. It is this kind of investment a country needs to develop social programmes"*. He also insisted on the social responsibility of the companies, which they could assume by creating decent jobs.

Another initiative put forward during this Forum was the creation of the trade union advisory group to the Forum. The advocates of such a committee consider it a way to weigh on the Forum's agenda and proceedings, and an opportunity to meet international managers. The WCL will have to discuss this matter.

**DECEASE OF BRAHIM BAKASSE**

It is with profound sadness that the WCL mourns the loss of Brahim Bakasse, who passed away in N'Djamena on 9 January last. As president of the CLTT from Chad, as vice-president of the DOAWTU and as member of the WCL Confederal Board, no effort was ever too much for him to improve the lot of the workers of Chad and Africa.

**VISIT FROM A DELEGATION OF THE CDT-MOROCCO**

On 10-13 January 2002, the WCL had pleasure in receiving Mr Noubir El amaoui and Mr Mohanem Bouzia, the respective secretary-general and head of the International Relations and Emigration Department of the *Confédération Démocratique du Travail*. This first meeting since the organisation's affiliation at the Bucharest Congress was aimed to enhance the relations and to outline the future co-operation programme.

The CDT, originally a teacher's union, can look back on a long history of struggle; as a spearhead of democratic and autonomous trade unionism, it is an emblematic organisation in its country. The affiliation to the WCL heralds a new era because, as secretary-general Noubir El Amaoui underlined, international action is now necessary to create a new balance of power in favour of the protection of the workers' rights.

Within the WCL, the CDT stand side by side

**TELE-FLASH**

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with another Moroccan organisation, the UGTM. This demonstrates that a positive and constructive trade union pluralism is possible in Morocco and in the Maghreb countries.

#### **MISSION TO INDONESIA**

On 23-29 January, the secretary-general of the WCL, Willy Thys, conducted a mission to our Indonesian affiliate, the SBSI. The organisation's National Council meeting in Siantar, Sumatra, was an opportunity to assess the evolution of the SBSI eighteen months after its Congress. The presence of the minister of Labour (former president of the FSPI, the official trade union) and of ILO representatives marked the recognition of the SBSI. One thousand five hundred people attended the opening session of the National Council. Muchtar Pakpahan, president of the Indonesian confederation, centred his address on democracy and the presence of military people in Parliament. Willy Thys evoked in his address the distance covered since his first meeting with Muchtar Pakpahan, in 1997, when he was imprisoned and assured the SBSI of the WCL's support. He also congratulated Mr Pakpahan again on his election as vice-president of the WCL. In conclusion, Willy Thys encouraged the Indonesian government, represented by the minister of Labour, to apply the ILO conventions ratified by Indonesia.

#### **TRADE ACTION IN AFRICA...**

The 25<sup>th</sup> Congress of the WCL laid the foundation of an action programme to strengthen Trade Action. This four-year programme is centred on three main lines: education and training, multinational companies and the informal sector.

A consultation phase is now in progress in order to finalise this programme. Once enriched with the results of these consultations, the action programme will be ratified by the Trade Action Committee at its meeting next April.

Africa was the first stage in this consultation phase. The deputy secretary-general in charge of Trade Action, Jaap Wiene, said he was impressed by the quality of the African Trade Action leaders, by their pragmatic approach and by the excellent positions they are holding in their organisations and countries. Nevertheless, the needs are strong, particularly in the matter of the social dialogue. Apart from that, these leaders also need support to strengthen and consolidate their positions as partners in the field who cannot be ignored. The eventual aim is to integrate the "system" in order to improve it from the inside and not only to fight it from the outside anymore.

The progress of Trade Action in Africa is real and tangible: the eight international trade federations were represented, and a genuine team spirit prevails between them, which is really a good omen.

#### **COLOMBIA, AND IT IS JUST GOING ON AND ON...**

The lifeless body of Aury Sara Marruga was found on 5 December 2001. After having been unlawfully imprisoned and tortured, the president of the sub-directorate USO-Cartagena was brutally murdered.

Edgar Herran, president of the *Sindicato Nacional de Chjoferes – SINDICNALCH*, was assassinated on 26 December 2001 at 7.30 am.

On 28 January 2002, Carlos Padilla was assassinated at home in front of members of his family.

Fray Luis de León, president of the hospital workers' federation, was threatened with death. The WCL urged the president of the Republic of Colombia strongly to institute inquiries in order to arrest and punish the culprits. It assured its affiliate, the CGTD, of its unconditional solidarity.

#### **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**

On 5 February 1962 was born in Santiago, in the Dominican Republic, the autonomous trade union in the pharmaceutical industry, SADIF, the first trade union of Christian inspiration in that country. Its action is still centred on the protection of an autonomous trade unionism in the face of the government, the employers and the political parties. It was the start of a trade union institution that is now celebrating its fortieth anniversary: the CASC.

#### **Schedule of activities**

15-16 Feb 02: SOTERMUN/USO: 6<sup>th</sup> Governing Committee, Madrid, Spain

17-23 Feb 02: BATU: Consultative Seminar on Trade Action, Manila, Philippines

21-23 Feb 02: WFCW: European Council, Doorn, the Netherlands

25 Feb.- 01 Mar 02: CLAT: Consultative Seminar on Trade Action, Caracas, Venezuela

25 Feb. - 01 Mar 02:ILO: Tripartite meeting to promote good relations in the oil refinery and oil and gas production sector, Geneva, Switzerland