

**MONTERREY : FIRST TIMID STEPS**

New at the International Conference on Development Funding (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March) was the fact that for the first time the IMF, the World Bank and the OMC were together around the same table to discuss development funding under the auspices of the United Nations. This first timid step can be the beginning of a new form of world governance in which the United Nations system will play a predominant role to achieve a balance between international trade and financial institutions on the one hand and social issues and equity concerns on the other.

However, the content of the Monterrey Consensus is relatively disappointing. It does not contain any firm pledge to materialise the commitment made long ago by the rich nations to allocate 0.7% of their GNP to public development assistance (PDA).

The Consensus does not really commit itself to designing a new international financial structure: for example, it fails to mention the regulation and taxation of the speculative short-term capital flows.

The Monterrey Consensus urges particularly the private sector and foreign investors to inject more capital and funds into infrastructure and other priority areas of developing countries. This could justify a new wave of privatisation, which is already known to be prejudicial to the poorest countries.

Such gaps should be bridged.

The main measures recommended by the WCL are:

- fundamental ILO Conventions must be based on the cornerstone of international social legislation;
- the ILO must be recognised as the social pillar of the new architecture of the world governance system;
- multilateral institutions must become more democratic, more transparent and more responsible, by organising real consultative meetings to allow trade union organisations to be taken into account in the formulation of world economic policies;
- essential social services must be and remain accessible to all, even if these services are provided by private operators. As a guarantee, mechanisms for consultation must be established, including all concerned parties and especially the trade unions;
- the Monterrey Consensus covering foreign debt through the revision of the HIPC (heavily indebted poor countries) initiative, must be implemented : debt reduction is thus linked to the achievement of the Millennium goals, and not to debt-export technical co-

efficients.

The Consensus text is available at the following address: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/0302finalMonterreyConsensus.pdf>

ILO: 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMITTEE ON FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

At its 283rd session (March 2002) the ILO Governing Body celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Committee on Freedom of Association. It organised on this occasion a panel discussion, which was attended by the WCL President, Basile Mahan Gahé, who at the time had been released from prison upon a recommendation from the Committee. The ILO points out that in the past ten years over two thousand trade union activities were set free that way.

The celebration did not prevent the Committee from participating normally in the proceedings of the Governing Body. It examined 31 cases, among which the one of Colombia. The Committee observed that «*the violence against trade union leaders persists*» and demanded that «*the government should inquire into these acts of violence and take the necessary measures to stop this impunity*».

For more details about the 283rd Governing Body session we refer to the ILO press statement at the following address: <http://www.ilo.org/public/french/bureau/inf/pr/2002/13.htm>

INFEDOP: 20TH WORLD CONGRESS IN LUXEMBURG

The International Federation of Employees in Public Services (INFEDOP) organised its 20th World Congress in Luxemburg on 20-22 March. Delegates from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe had debates on the following issues: ethics in public services, social dialogue and new forms of employment. The Secretary General presented a general activities report, which was completed with reports from the continents. The Congress adopted an action programme for the period 2002-2007. It also elected a new Executive Committee: Fritz Neugebauer was elected President, Wilhelm Gloss is the new Treasurer, and Bert Van Caelenberg was re-elected Secretary General.

MISSIONS TO MEXICO AND HONDURAS

On the occasion of his participation in the Monterrey Summit (Mexico) the WCL Secretary General, Willy Thys, visited our affiliates in Mexico and conducted a mission to Honduras. The nearness to the United States has set going in Mexico a process of industrial development, particularly in the north of the

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country and in Mexico City. Willy Thys was received by the leaders of the COR, Joel Lopez Mayren, Secretary General, and Raul Moreno Wonchee, Deputy Secretary General. Afterwards, he was invited by the brothers and sisters of CENPROS, José Merced and the activists to a debate with around forty trade union and social leaders from Mexico City. The main topic was the Monterrey Conference, of course. Other topics were the social security systems and the struggle against unemployment and poverty. In conclusion the Secretary General visited the brothers and sisters of the CNT.

In Honduras the Secretary General had a more than two hours' talk with President Maduron on the consequences of the Monterrey Conference, but also on issues such as the state revenue and corruption. The Secretary General pointed out the social inequalities and the matter of trade union presence in the *maquilas*. The *maquilas* issues exceeds the borders of Honduras, as companies relocate from one country to the other in accordance with their interests. Honduras is suffering from the repercussions of privatisation, which is affecting severely the energy and water-supply sectors.

First, the Secretary General met the leaders of the *Central General de Trabajadores*, Daniel Duron, Secretary General, and Felicito Avila Ordonez, Deputy Secretary General of the CLAT. The working meeting was about the employment situation, the recognition of trade unions in the *maquilas*, the issue of the guaranteed minimum wage and the situation in agriculture.

Then he met the leaders of the agricultural sector, in which the CGT is strongly present. He had also a contact with three Honduran confederations.

Lastly, the Secretary General visited the *El Mochito* mine near San Pedro Sula, the only Honduran mine in which trade unions are recognised. The workers are involved in the management of the mine, and collective services are

provided on a participatory basis. This experiment, which seems to yield favourable results, demonstrates that third world workers are creative and capable of working out original solutions to their problems.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS UPDATE

Colombia. The CGTD has informed the WCL on the murder of Rafael Jaimes Torra, Treasurer of the Barrancabermeja section of the *Union Sindical Obrero*. The trade union leader was murdered in the night of 21 March, when driving home to Barrancabermeja. By letter to President Pastrana, the WCL condemned this murder very strongly and insisted on an investigation in order to punish the culprits according to the law.

Schedule of activities

07-14 April 2002: Conference on «The issues of development, trade and environment», BATU – ATF/MIG, Manila, the Philippines

08-11 April 2002: Seminar for women workers, UGTM, Morocco

08-26 April 2002: Seminar on «The role of training and the strengthening of the WCL», Ter Nood, Belgium

08-12 April 2002: WFIW seminar for miners, Africa, Conakry, Guinea

11-13 April 2002: 7th Confederal Congress of the USO, Spain

15-16 April 2002: TUAC, workshop on education, training and employment policy, Paris, France

16-17 April 2002: First EU-LAC Trade Union Summit, Madrid, Spain

17-19 April 2002: Second meeting of the EU-LAC civil society, Madrid, Spain

22-27 April 2002: WCL Confederal Board, Brussels, Belgium