



**WCL-ICFTU:
INSTITUTION OF A JOINT FORUM**

On 5 April last, the WCL and the ICFTU had a meeting at the level of the general secretariats to realise the agreement on the institution of a Joint Forum, concluded on 28 March 2001. Both international trade union confederations agreed on a project specifying the terms and conditions and the working mechanisms of this Forum. Its main aims will be:

- a) to work out and adopt joint positions on matters of mutual interest for the international trade union movement;
- b) to avoid and settle disputes between the ICFTU and the WCL and their respective structures and affiliates;
- c) to examine the possibilities of joint action.

The participants in the forum meetings will be the ICFTU and WCL secretaries general and, on each occasion, the staff members in charge of the items on the agenda.

The Forum would meet at least twice a year and be organised by the WCL and the ICFTU in turn.

The governing bodies of both international confederations will have to approve of this project.

**FIRST EUROPEAN UNION –
LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN
TRADE UNION SUMMIT**

On 16-17 April 2002 was held in Madrid a European Union – Latin America and Caribbean (EU-LAC) Trade Union Summit. It was convened jointly by the international organisations ICFTU, WCL, ETUC, ORIT and CLAT, with support from their respective Spanish affiliates (UGT, CCOO, USO and ELA), and attended by 105 delegates representing workers and women workers from countries in both regions. This Summit was held in preparation for the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the European Union and Latin America – Caribbean (Madrid, Spain, 17-18 May 2002).

The Summit passed in review the evolution of the economic integration processes, the regional and subregional association agreements, the effects of economic globalisation and the problems of foreign debt, unemployment and economic, social and political crisis, which are particularly poignant in some countries. The Summit pointed out the need to integrate respect for the ILO standards in the EU/LAC agreements.

The Trade Union Summit had a thorough debate on the evolution of trade unionism and the need to increase the international action, the co-operation and the solidarity between the workers and between their organisations. It denounced the constraints imposed on the

workers and women workers in the exercise of their rights, constraints met with in many companies and particularly in transnational ones, but also on the part of several governments.

The Trade Union Summit expressed the will of the European and Latin American/Caribbean trade union movement to consolidate a permanent co-ordination so as to improve the trade union action in each country and the action between the workers' representatives in transnational companies, with the end in view of raising the efficiency of worker participation in the institutions and in each relevant body.

The Trade Union Summit expressed its resolute support of the current progress in the matter of workers' unity, as is reflected by the very composition of the Summit by the way, the creation of single trade union structures, the meetings between the ETUC and the trade union structures of the Mercosur (CCSCS and CTCS) and between these structures and the Advisory Labour Council of the Andean Zone, as well as the important agreement on trade union action unity signed by the ORIT and the CLAT in September 2001.

The Trade Union Summit prepared the participation of the workers in the 2nd UE-LAC Civil Society Meeting, scheduled for 17, 18 and 19 April, which will discuss its proposals with managers and with other social organisations and entities. The proposals will be presented to the Summit of Governments, in May.

TRADE ACTION MISSION TO CHINA

On 1-9 April, a delegation of WCL Trade Action conducted a contact mission to China. The delegation, led by Michel Bovy (FIOST), was composed of Jacques Jouret (IFTC), Louis Van Beneden (WCT), Bart Bruggeman (WFIW), Necie Lucero (BATU) and Jaap Wienen (WCL). The mission followed on the WCL's first mission to China, in 2000, and on the visit of leaders of the Chinese federation ACFTU to Brussels. It fitted in with the co-operation agreement the ACFTU and the WCL signed at the end of 2000, and was an opportunity to get acquainted with the structure and functioning of the ACFTU Trade Action.

China joined the World Trade Organisation in December 2001, and the Chinese federation considers this membership to be positive. From an economic point of view, China is experiencing a strong rise in foreign investments and the creation of new jobs in the industry and services sectors in the process. On the other hand, the rate of unemployment is strongly on the increase in agriculture, causing migration to the cities and the growth of the informal sector.

TELE-FLASH

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Responsible editor :
Willy Thys
Information officer :
Mathieu Debroux.

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WCL

Trierstraat 33
B-1040 Brussels
Tel : 02/285.47.00
Fax : 02/230.87.22
E-mail:
info@cmt-wcl.org
Internet:
www.cmt-wcl.org

The textile sector is going to a considerable restructuring on account of the modernisation of the technical installations, which is causing a sizeable loss of jobs.

The delegation also gained an insight into the education and transport situation in the Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen regions.

Along the meetings and talks, the WCL pointed out the essential role of the ILO and its basic conventions as well as its interest in transnational companies, 300 out of the 500 most important ones of which are present in China. The informal sector is another field of interest to the WCL, the more so as it is expected to boom in the foreseeable future.

The international trade federations of the WCL and their Chinese counterparts will set up a network to exchange information. A Chinese delegation will visit the Belgian and Dutch textile federations, and their teachers' federation will attend the next WCT Congress, scheduled for July.

The ACFTU expects from the WCL special support in the matter of social dialogue and bargaining. It also wants to co-operate on staging seminars and workshops on specific themes. The informal sector was also a topic.

The WCL, for its part, expects the ACFTU to promote the application of the ILO conventions in China.

NEW USO SECRETARY GENERAL

The USO from Spain organised its 7th Congress on 11-13 April 2002. It elected a new Secretary General, Benito Lopez, who thanked Manuel

Zaguirre cordially for his tenacity, efforts and work in his 25 years' leadership of the Spanish organisation. Manuel Zaguirre was elected President.

The Congress discussed the lines of force of the action programme for 2002-2006. It set up a Trade Action Secretariat in support of the action of the trade federations and groupings.

The Congress emphasised the struggle for full employment, solidarity and the social integration of immigrant workers in order to achieve that Spanish and immigrant workers benefit from the same working conditions.

The Secretary General of the WCL, Willy Thys, took the floor during the closing session. He saluted Manuel Zaguirre and wished the new Secretary General good luck.

Schedule of activities

22-27 April: G8 « Labour and Employment », Montreal, Canada

26-27 April: ETUC : seminar « Collective Bargaining and Wage-Scale Evolution in the Applicant Countries », Gdansk, Poland

27-30 April: International Council of the World Social Forum, Barcelona, Spain

29 April -2 May: UNCTAD, 19th session of the « Trade and Development » Committee, Bangkok, Thailand

3-5 May: 3th Congress of the CAT/Chile, Santiago de Chile