



RESULT OF THE 90TH SESSION OF THE ILC

The 90th International Labour Conference took place in Geneva from 3 to 20 June 2002. Under the chairmanship of Mr Jean-Jacques Elmiger, Secretary of State at the Federal Department of the Swiss Economy, the Conference received two honorary guests, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad, and the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mr Owen Arthur, who in their addresses both went into the theme of globalisation.

A theme that gave rise to lengthy debates was no doubt the one related to the **informal sector** or economy. Myriam Luz Triana Alvis (*Central General de Trabajadores Democraticos* from Colombia and Chairwomen of the World Women's Committee), who had been appointed member of the editorial committee for the workers' group, took an active part in them. At the end, the ILO Conference declared itself in favour of a new ILO programme centred on job creation, social protection and reduction of poverty in the informal economy. This new programme should be extended to those who do not enjoy the rights and benefits of the labour standards and the global economy.

The theme of **promotion of co-operatives** had been the subject of a first discussion on the revision of the Co-operatives Recommendation (No. 127) during the 89th session of the International Labour Conference (2001). It was discussed a second time this year, in the presence of Mrs Rabiato Dialo, Secretary General of the *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée* and Chairwoman of the WCL World Women's Committee. In conclusion the Conference adopted a new Recommendation of universal application on this subject, in substitution for Recommendation No. 127 (1966), which was reserved for the developing countries. It requested the members of the Organisation to take appropriate measures to promote co-operatives in all the countries in order to create jobs, to develop business, to increase savings and investments and to improve the social welfare.

As far as the **industrial accidents and occupational diseases** are concerned, the Conference adopted a Recommendation suggesting the member countries to draw up national lists of occupational diseases for preventive purposes, and a Protocol inviting the signatory countries to "*establish and re-examine periodically the provisions and procedures to register industrial accidents, occupational diseases and, should the occasion arise, hazardous events and commuting accidents*".

The **Committee on the Application of the Standards** examined cases in 24 countries. One of these cases was the situation in Myanmar: despite the opening of an ILO Liaison Office in Rangoon, the Committee observed, forced labour persisted in this country; it insisted on real progress in the matter of the abolition of forced labour. Among the other cases, we quote the situation in the Sudan, Ethiopia and Venezuela. The Sudan owed its place in this top three on account of the non-observation of the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29) and of problems related to abduction and the trafficking in women and children. Ethiopia, for its part, was pointed at for having violated the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87); nevertheless, the Ethiopian government applied for technical assistance from the Organisation, which the Committee welcomed. In the case of Venezuela, too, Convention 87 was on the agenda.

In his speech to the plenary session Willy Thys, WCL Secretary General, expressed his support to the ILO Director General, Juan Somavia, in his "*struggle to have the International Labour Organisation at last placed at the same level as the WTO and the financial Bretton Woods institutions. (...) An effective co-operation between these organisations and the fact of considering the social dimension of globalisation are both factors capable of reducing the inequalities worldwide*". Willy Thys declared himself in favour of a modern and reinforced standard-setting system of the ILO. In the opinion of the WCL, the most effective way to eradicate poverty is to advance decent and dignified work for all. It is obvious that decent work cannot exist without respect for the international labour standards. The WCL has always been very much engaged in the standard-setting process at the ILO. It joins in with the position of the workers' group that there can be no trust in the revision of the ILO's standard-setting system as long as the three groups – governments, employers and workers – do not make a joint commitment to improve the ILO's standard-setting activities and not to weaken them. It appears, however, that we are still far from such a commitment, in view of the position of the employers and of some governments.

Lastly, Willy Thys went into the situation in the Middle East. He concluded by saying that "*fair and lasting peace between Palestine and Israel plays a predominant role in the contribution to worldwide détente and to the appeasement of other conflicts. Peace is an indispen-*

TELE-FLASH

is a two-weekly information bulletin containing brief trade union messages, edited by the information department of the WCL.

Responsible editor :
Willy Thys
Information officer :
Mathieu Debroux.

Reproduction authorised under acknowledgement of source

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

sable factor of a world order based on solidarity and social justice as foundations of a real globalisation with a human face”.

WCL PRESIDENT ELECTED TO THE ILO GOVERNING BODY

This year the ILO had to renew its Governing Body. Basile Mahan Gahé, WCL President, was elected regular member. He “succeeded” to Fernand Kikongi, the outgoing WCL President. The Governing Body meets three times a year, in Geneva, and is the ILO’ executive body. It is composed of 28 government members, 14 employers’ members and 14 workers’ members, elected every three years. It is composed, further, of 19 regular and 19 deputy workers’ members, who are all elected in the Workers’ Group in accordance with the electoral board

LOSS OF A GRAND TRADE UNION ACTIVIST: CHEIKH MBACKÉ SOW

It is with profound sadness the WCL was informed, on 12 June, of the decease of brother Cheikh Mbacké Sow, Permanent Secretary of the UTDS and member of the National Executive Committee. The trade union movement lost a loyal activist who never spared his devotion and courage for the cause of the workers. On behalf of all its members, the WCL has expressed its most sincere condolences to his family, his friends and his comrades in the trade union struggle.

CARTEL ALFA ORGANISED A MARATHON DEMONSTRATION

On 30 May, 100,000 workers demonstrated in 26 Romanian cities against the attitude of the government to the problems of the civil society. In view of the lack of results in the negotiations with the government, Cartel Alfa decided to organise in Bucharest a marathon demonstration to express the population’s discontent at the social and economic situation in Romania. The demonstration took place continuously from 11 to 30 June in support of demands such as: salaries for a decent and dignified life, a guaranteed equitable retirement pension, bearable taxes and social contributions, correct labour relations, social protection of the unemployed, stable jobs.

GENERAL STRIKE IN SPAIN

In Spain the situation of the workers has taken a turn for the worse. Thus, the following has to be pointed out: precarious and undignified work affects over 30% of the active population, there is growing trend to reduce the wages drastically, the exploitation of migrant, child and women workers is on the increase, and the pension funds are in jeopardy. In view of this alarming situation, the entire trade union movement mobilised and called a general strike on 19 June in the Basque Country and on 20 June in Spain. The trade unions expressed their disagreement with the economic, social and labour policy of the government. The WCL supported its Spanish affiliates, the USO and the ELA, both taking part in these actions.

GUARANTEE PUBLIC SERVICES ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

In a press release dated 28 June 2002, Mr Mike Moore, WTO Director General, and Ambassador Alejandro Jara (Chile), Chairman of the Special Session of the WTO Services Council, stated that the WTO negotiations to liberalise the trade in services were not threat to the public services. Both WTO representatives made it clear that “*every government has the right to exclude public services – including health, education and water distribution – from the negotiations and that it is for governments to decide which service sectors they wish to liberalise and which they do not*”.

By letter to Commissioner Lamy, Emilio Gabaglio, ETUC Secretary General, had asked the European Union “*to make no commitment that could undermine the European public services or enforce their privatisation*”. In his reply, Commissioner Lamy specified that “*the Commission has no intention to advance or demand the privatisation of public services during the current or future negotiations*”.

Despite this clarification by the Commission, the ETUC will keep a close eye on the proceedings of the negotiations within the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The WCL, the ETUC and the Global Unions group specified their point of view in a joint declaration on the GATS talks. In the opinion of the trade unions, the current talks must in no case “*thwart the access to the vital public services and to other services of common interest... These services are too indispensable for the welfare of the populations to be the subject of private competition according to the WTO rules*”.

In their joint declaration, the WCL and its partners demand the following measures in particular: the next WTO Conference must take the necessary measures to expressly exclude the public services from the agendas of future GATS negotiations; the next agreements must refer expressly to the primacy of social and environmental issues over the “free trade” principle; the countries must not find themselves forced to privatise their public services against their will; the countries must maintain the freedom not to submit the public services and the services of common interest to competition; as is provided in the GATS, an exhaustive assessment of the social, environmental and economic impact of the GATS negotiations must be conducted without delay; and the GATS negotiations must take place with a maximum of transparency and democratic participation.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM: DEVELOPMENT OF CONTACTS WITH THE TRADE UNION WORLD

At the latest World Economic Forum (WEF), in New York in January 2002, a meeting with top trade union leaders laid the foundation of a joint advisory group with the trade unions. On 14 June in Geneva, the WEF Chairman, Klaus Schwab, and his collaborators had a meeting with the representatives of the

Global Unions group and the WCL. The purpose was to continue the discussions on the advisory group conceived in New York.

The WEF underwent a number of organisational changes. In future, the WEF wishes to develop consultations with a variety of groups such as NGOs, religious leaders, leaders of United Nations agencies... Moreover, the WEF wishes to strengthen the trade union participation in annual and regional meeting as well as in important discussion panels. The advisory group ought to make it easier to realise this will. A draft text defining the terms and conditions of the joint advisory group with the trade unions was prepared. The group will be composed of affiliates of the Global Unions and of the WCL. A special effort will be made to respect gender equality and the representation of the developing countries in this group.

We remind that the WCL takes an active part in the World Social Forum, whose International Council will meet in Bangkok on 13-15 August next.

WORLD BOARD OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF INDUSTRY WORKERS

On 9-10 June, the WFIW organised in Elewijt (Belgium) a world seminar in the margin of its World Board meeting. The seminar on "Evolution of International Economic Relations and their Impact on the Workers" allowed a debate on the negative and positive aspects of globalisation. After the lectures by the experts, the participants assembled in workshops and pooled their findings. The conclusions resulted in five long-term lines of force for the WFIW:

- advance and encourage worldwide respect for the code of conduct for multinational companies and for the tripartite ILO declaration on multinational companies;
- examine the theme of sustainable development in co-operation with the WCL and the ILO;
- analyse the effects of globalisation and protect the public services;
- advance, with the help of the ILO, a social partnership to protect and/or develop social security systems;
- advance, with the help of the WCL among others,

the trade union views on globalisation and liberalisation at the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. The WFIW elected a new President, Bart Bruggeman, and a new Secretary General, Italo Rodomonti.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS UPDATE

Colombia. The WFAFW and the CGTD, the Colombian WCL affiliate, informed us of the assassination of two activists. Carlos Julio Gomez led a communal action committee of the municipality of La Plata, Huila. He was assassinated on his way home, in the company of his young son. He distinguished himself by his peaceful struggle for the protection of the basic peasants' rights. Helio Rodriguez Ruiz, leader of HOCAR, the national federation of food and hotel workers, affiliated to the CGTD, was shot dead on 20 June at 1:30 pm on his way to work.

Kazakhstan. The WCL was informed of repeated violations of the basic trade union rights in this country, particularly in the cities of Rudnov and Sokolovsko-Sarbaisk. Activists of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Kazakhstan, affiliated to the WCL, were intimidated and unlawfully dismissed on account of their trade union commitment and of the fact that they defended their right to decent work and better living conditions. The government authorities did not come to the aid of the threatened trade unionists. Thus, the government was deficient in its duty in that it failed to enforce respect for the international agreements and the ILO conventions, which the Republic of Kazakhstan has signed.

Schedule of activities

04-05 July 2002: ACP-UE relations, WCL follow-up committee, Brussels, Belgium

07-11 July 2002: Trade Action seminar in Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan

14-19 July 2002: World Forum of the Civil Society, Geneva, Switzerland

21-27 July 2002: WCT Congress, Varna, Bulgaria

28-29 July 2002: Standing Secretariat in Solidarity with the Palestinian Workers, Cairo, Egypt