

**'EURODEMO': FOR AN INSPIRED EUROPEAN SOCIAL LEGISLATION**

In early July, Italy – led by its Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi – began its mandate as President of the European Union for a six months' period. Among the principal items on the agenda during the Italian presidency of the EU is the start of the Intergovernmental Conference on 4 October. At the end of this Conference, which includes a series of summit meetings, the final version of the European Constitution should have been defined. In order to support the demands of the trade unions and to again emphasise the need for a worthwhile social legislation for all workers within a united Europe, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) will organise the great Euro demonstration 'EURODEMO' in Rome, on the same date, together with the Italian trade unions. The demonstrators will also highlight themes such as employment and pensions.

**TRADE UNION PROPOSALS FOR THE REVISION OF THE EU REGULATIONS ON THE GPS (2005-2014)**

The European Union is revising its Generalized Preference System of (GPS). As a reminder, this system provides reduced customs tariffs for imports from many developing countries. The new system would cover a very long period: 2005-2014. Global Unions, the WCL and ETUC are following this debate in a concerted manner and have developed a position paper stating their positions on the new GPS. The incorporation of incentives and sanctions linked to the non-respect for international labour standards is at the heart of this document. You will find the full text of these proposals on the WCL web site ([www.cmt-wcl.org](http://www.cmt-wcl.org)). The trade union movement is convinced that these measures, combined with other development policies, has «*the potential to fundamentally change the working and living conditions of people in a large part of the developing world*».

**THE WCL CONDEMNS THE ATTACK AGAINST THE UN HEADQUARTERS IN IRAQ**

On 20 August, the WCL sent a letter to the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to express its deep sadness at the death of Sergio Vieira de Mello. The previous day, during a devastating bomb attack on the UN Headquarters in Iraq, this diplomat and High Commissioner of the United Nations and a Human Rights specialist was killed, together with about fifteen other representatives of the

United Nations. «*The WCL strongly condemns this terrorist act and pays tribute to Sergio Vieira de Mello as well as to the United Nations, for their personal investment in Human Rights and the desire to enhance justice in the world*», the letter stated.

**DISMISSED WORKERS OF THE CBK CAN RESUME WORK!**

Last March, 18 colleagues of the «Compagnie des Bauxites de Kindia (CBK)», in the Republic of Guinea, were dismissed because they had organised a strike. Among them were leaders of the CNTG (International Confederation of Guinean Workers), a member of the WCL. This matter was referred to the WCL and DOAWTU and the campaign undertaken head-on by the three organizations led to positive results. After a discussion between the Labour Minister and the Secretary General of the CBK, all the dismissed workers were able to return to work in early August.

**NEW INTERNET SITE OF CCAS**

The CCAS (Consejo Coordinador Argentino Sindical) – The Argentine organization affiliated to the WCL – has recently acquired its own Internet site. This portal, whose address is <http://www.ccas.org.ar>, ought to help improve and accelerate the dissemination of information on the activities of the CCAS. A modern browsing system, well conceived, rapidly provides information on a number of themes «women labour», «child labour» and «human rights». And this, in not less than about twelve foreign languages. The publications of the CCAS are also proposed on the site.

**THE «STANDARDS» DEPARTMENT IS LAUNCHING A CAMPAIGN TO CLARIFY THE MURDER OF ASHOK KUMAR TRIVEDI**

Following the assassination of Ashok Kumar Trivedi – former president of the CFTUI (Confederation of Free Trade Unions of India) and a civil judge last May –, the WCL «Standards» department launched a campaign jointly with its Asian department of BATU-SAARC. The trade unions, social organisations and human rights associations were invited to send a letter to the President of India. In this letter, the government is being requested to ensure that justice is done, to open an enquiry into the murder of Trivedi and to arrest the guilty persons. Letters were also sent by BATU-SAARC to the Prime Minister of India, the Prime Minister of the State of Bihar and the High Commissioner of India in Colombo.

**TELE-FLASH**

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

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### **THE APTUC GIVES ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF THE MONSOON IN PAKISTAN**

Violent rains during the monsoon have had disastrous consequences in Pakistan this summer. Floods and mud slides have deprived hundreds of thousands of persons of a roof over their heads. More than 200 persons have



**Mud slides in Pakistan: thousands of persons are deprived of a roof over their heads.**

been killed. Harvests have also been affected by this catastrophe and breeders have also lost large numbers of their livestock. The APTUC (All Pakistan Trade Union Congress), a member of the WCL, as well as social protection bodies of the United Nations and other humanitarian organisations, got together to provide assistance to the affected regions. All the member organisations and trade federations of APTUC took charge of the distribution of food items, to provide pure potable water as well as medical supplies. The WCL appreciates the work done and wishes the APTUC together with all Pakistani citizens, much courage.

### **FIRST IN SRI LANKA: A TRADE UNION WINS A REFERENDUM IN THE FREE-TRADE ZONE**

The NWC (National Workers' Congress – Sri Lanka) has been fighting, since 1998, through its member organisation «Polytex Ekamathu Sevaka Sangamaya» (PESS), for workers' rights with the textile producer Polytex, active in the free-trade zone in Koggala. Through training programmes and awareness campaigns, the trade union has gradually succeeded in gaining the confidence of workers. In 2002, the PESS was officially integrated into the register of Sri Lankan trade unions. However, in spite of this recognition, it was very difficult to intervene to promote the workers' rights. That is why the NWC requested the Labour Minister as well as the general administrator for labour to organise a referendum. The vote was held on 29 June under the watchful eyes of observers from the government and representatives of employers and workers. No less than 82% of workers chose the NWC to represent them officially during negotiations. A crushing victory for the independent Sri Lankan trade union!

### **THE ABORIGINES RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM THE BSSF**

Nearly 300.000 aborigines live in communities in the North and East of Bangladesh. Although the aborigines are the most ancient inhabitants of the country and are called «the sons of the earth», they can only count on little support and recognition from the government. The illiterate aborigines work more often than not as workers

for large agricultural firms, a situation whereby they are again exploited by the large land owners. The federation of BSSF (Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation), affiliated to the WCL, intends to remedy this situation. Thus, on 25 July, a conference bringing together the leaders of 16 different districts was organised. The problems of the indigenous communities were dealt with and solutions proposed. Every one agreed that it was indispensable to join forces in order to fight against the injustice meted out to the aborigines. A working group has already been formed jointly with the BSSF. It intends to obtain facilities for the natives and favour their integration.

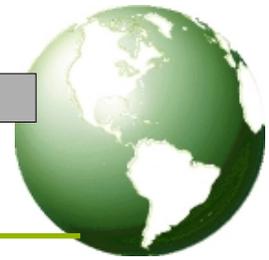
### **DEATH OF AUGUST VANISTENDAEL, EX SECRETARY GENERAL**

August Vanistendael passed away on 8 September, in Louvain (Belgium) at the age of 86 years. M. Vanistendael was appointed Minister of State in Belgium, in 1983, after distinguishing himself particularly within the Christian labour movement. Immediately after completing his studies, he started his career at the *Confédération syndicale chrétienne* (ACV-CSC), where he became increasingly interested in the trade union movement. He became an important personality within the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), of which he was the Secretary General from 1952 to 1967. Further, August Vanistendael participated actively in the discussions and the preparation of the transformation of the IFCTU into the present WCL, a transformation that took place during the 16th Congress, immediately after he finished his term of office. His efforts at world level and his profound solidarity resulted in his appointment as Minister of State and as lecturer at the University of Louvain (Belgium) where he taught development politics.

#### **Schedule of activities**

- 03 October: Eurofedop Executive Committee, Luxembourg;
- 03-05 October: WFCW World Board (World Federation of Clerical Workers), Brussels – Belgium;
- 07-08 October: Symposium: «Working at the heart of the society », Perugia – Italy;
- 07-10 October: COLACOT - 6<sup>th</sup> Latin-American Congress, Bogotá – Colombia;
- 08-09 October: Meeting of the UBUNTU Board, Perugia – Italy;
- 10-12 October: 90th Anniversary of NAPFE, Chattanooga – United States;
- 12-13 October: WCL European Seminar: «Latest developments in Europe», Brussels – Belgium;
- 13-31 October: WCL – IIWE Seminar on the informal economy, Belgium;
- 19-25 October: WCL Confederal Board, Jakarta – Indonesia;

**The schedule of activities is available on the WCL website: [www.cmt-wcl.org](http://www.cmt-wcl.org)**



# Trade Action

## INFEDOP CAUTIONS AGAINST THE LIBERALISATION OF THE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Following the general blackout which occurred in North America and in parts of Canada, Infedop is cautioning against the liberalisation of the electricity market. The liberalisation of electrical plants in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s did not, as expected, lead to the improvement in supply or a reduction in electricity prices. On the contrary, this liberalisation has given rise to an increase in competition between the private electricity companies, which seek to maximize their profits. The infrastructure is exploited to the maximum of its possibilities, whereas investments for the modernization of the network are low. By supporting actions throughout the world against the privatization of the sector, Infedop hopes to avoid catastrophes like what recently happened in the United States.

Further information is available on the WCL site at the address: [www.cmt-wcl.org](http://www.cmt-wcl.org)

## THE IFTC WORLD CONGRESS PUTS EMPHASIS ON WORKING CONDITIONS

From 25 to 27 September, about 90 trade union delegations from all parts of the world will meet in Doorn, Netherlands, for the 33rd World Congress of the International Federation of Textiles and Clothing (IFTC). A world seminar will also be organised as a follow-up to this Congress. During this Congress, special emphasis will be put on the themes «Working conditions in the world» and «Quality of work». The IFTC is, in fact, extremely concerned by the effects of globalization on the quality of work and by the conditions in which the workers must work. A good number of small enterprises in the textiles and clothing sector are based in free zones in third world countries. Salaries there are very low, the working conditions poor, and the trade unions oppressed. In the more developed countries, many workers work in clandestine (illegal) workshops without benefiting from any social protection. Moreover, the freedom of association and possibilities for negotiation are often limited in such a way that all efforts for equal salaries and decent working salaries are made almost impossible. «All these developments require the establishment of a worldwide strategy by trade unions all over the world», declares the IFTC.

## MEETING OF THE WFIW WORLD COMMITTEE AND SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On 23 of last June, the World Committee of the World Federation of Industry Workers (WFIW) met in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This meeting was preceded by a seminar on «Sustainable development». The participants had intensive discussions in working groups on the significance of sustainable development for the trade unions, and the priority that must be given to it within the

framework of discussions on employment and working conditions. In this respect, to arrive at a consensus, it appeared as a matter of great importance to establish a social dialogue between the employers and the public authorities. The members of the WFIW also emphasised the durable and social character of enterprises to be respected by employers. The world federation insists on the fundamental right of each person to drinking water, health care, decent accommodation, education and energy as a basis for sustainable development. The WFIW intends to closely follow the evolutions of this theme and to set up an information network. Besides, the world business councils will be expanded, and the WFIW will ensure the application of ethical codes as well as the training and sensitization of member organizations.

## SEMINAR ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF WORKING CONDITIONS OF MINERS

From 26 to 28 June, colleagues of the common international secretariat of the WFBW – WFIW – IFTC went to Cochabamba, in Bolivia, for the first Latin American seminar of miners organised by the «miners» section of the WFIW. Before the seminar, working visits were paid to the Federation of Trade Unions of Mine



*the mining cooperatives demand that the Bolivian public authorities reinvest in the sector.*

Workers of Bolivia COB and to the Federation of Construction and Wood Workers in La Paz as well as to the Federations of the Bolivian Confederation of Construction and Wood Workers. The theme of the seminar of mine workers was «safety and health». There are presently more than 500 mining cooperatives in Latin America, comprising a total of over 50.000 miners. About twelve years ago, when the Bolivian consortium COMBIBOL shut down the mines, many miners chose to resume work at their own risk. Their working days are very long and their working conditions are very



dangerous. There is a lack of safety measures and sanitary equipment hardly exist. For this reason, the mining cooperatives demand that the Bolivian public authorities reinvest in the sector. Before and during the seminar, they undertook large-scale activities. The roads were blocked and public transport paralysed in large parts of the country. The Bolivian construction and wood workers also work in difficult conditions. Considering the economic recession affecting the building sector and resulting in massive job losses, more and more workers are working in the informal economy sector. This also explains the attitude of several hundreds of wood workers, who have decided to go it alone by organizing their own forest plantations on lands acquired with personal funds.

### **THE FIOST CONTINUES TO FIGHT FOR A GLOBAL TRANSPORT POLICY**



Considering the evolution of economic production processes, the transport sector has experienced a considerable improvement. However, this growth has given rise to a number of specific problems. Notably in the developing countries which suffer from

a crucial lack of transport infrastructure necessary to link the different markets, towns, etc. That is why the FIOST (International Federation of Trade Union Organisations of Transport Workers) has never ceased fighting for a harmonisation of the different transport systems and the formulation of a global transport policy, also in developing countries. A sustainable development project properly studied with a view to improving mobility must, in fact, make it possible for each person to use the different means of transport. For this it is necessary to take account of the specific nature of the sector to which certain commercial criteria cannot be applied. Among them is the permanent «excess capacity» helping to meet the market demand at peak periods. During the last FIOST Congress in Casablanca, the criterion for excess capacity, and many other challenges usually facing the transport sector were analysed in depth. The negotiations relating to the Congress resolutions will continue during the meeting of the FIOST World Board on 24 and 25 November in Ostende (Belgium).

### **WFAFW SEMINAR AND CONGRESS IN MADRID**

The third WFAFW Congress will take place from 26 to 27 September in Madrid, Spain. Items on the agenda are: food security, globalization, world tourism crisis, multinationals of the agriculture and tourism sectors, as well as the strengthening of WFAFW structures. The election of the new Committee will also take place during the Congress. Before its launch, a European seminar on «social dialogue and communication in the trade union movement» will be held. The organization of this seminar was made possible with the financial support of the EZA (the European Centre for Workers Questions).

### **WFCW MISSION TO SERBIA**

Ernst Gfrerer, the president of the European Organisation of the WFCW (World Federation of Clerical Workers) went this year to Serbia together with Roel Rotshuizen

and Olga Nicolae – WFCW president and executive secretary respectively. The mission was organised for the purpose of getting acquainted with the Autonomous Trade Union of Banks, Insurance Companies and other Financial Institutions in Serbia, as well as with the Autonomous Trade Union of Commercial Workers; both are members of the SSSS (Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia, a member of the WCL) and candidates for affiliation to the WFCW. The delegation also met the union leaders of the C-Market Company (Trade Union in the C-Market Company). From the meeting, the issues that clearly emerged were: the difficult economic and social situation facing the country; the nature of expectations of the unions; the opportunities for recruitment of new members in the near future. The decision relating to affiliations will be taken during the next meeting of the WFCW World Committee in October.

### **THE WCT CONFEDERAL BOARD OPPOSES THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR**

Following the decisions taken during the last congress of the «World Confederation of Teachers» (WCT) organised in Bulgaria, regional seminars were organised in Brussels and Buenos Aires, in Argentina. The decisions of these meetings and that of the Confederal Board – which was held from 25 to 29 August in Buenos Aires – were stated in the resolution entitled «The commercialization of education». In this resolution, the WCT indicates that the initiatives aimed at commercialising education are becoming increasingly frequent. That many schools are also dependent on foreign donors, which is mostly against the interest of students and reduces the equality of opportunities for each person. Often, in these schools, the working conditions of teachers are deteriorating, particularly those of the female staff. Moreover, the supranational bodies like the EU, MERCOSUR, etc., influenced by the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank, WTO), act increasingly according to economic principles, while the human factor should be the centre of interest. The concern expressed by the WCT during the 2002 congress relating to the GATS agreements is therefore still valid: the WCT and all the member countries will thus continue – through the support of the WCL – to fight so that education, financed by the public authorities, remains accessible to all. There is a need to ensure at all costs that commercial initiatives do not weaken the rights of the teaching personnel, neither at national level, nor at global level.

### **THE WCL DEFENDS WORKERS OF THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

The «Informal economy» action programme launched by the WCL Trade Action is in full swing. The member trade federations have been given the task and responsibility of giving more structural support to the major group of workers of the informal economy. During the Caracas and Lomé seminars, the first initiatives along these lines have already taken shape. Judging by the reports from Senegal, Indonesia and Colombia, etc., the workers of the informal sector of the textile industry are subjected daily to dreadful working conditions. The local trade unions have fortunately found ways to defend the rights of these workers. The reward is worth its weight in gold!