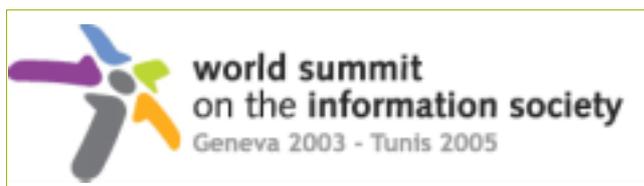


**INFORMATION SUMMIT:
DIGITAL DIVIDE HIGHLIGHTED**

The first stage of the World Summit on the Information Society was held at the end of 2003, from 10 to 12 December to be precise. The second stage of this



international meeting, a United Nations initiative, will take place in Tunis in 2005. The WCL participates in this event with the observer's status. The main purpose of the Information Summit is to reduce the digital divide between the richest countries and the developing countries so to promote the Millennium Declaration Goals (eradication of poverty and hunger, education for all...). We remind here that the digital divide is the difference in access to the new technologies and that it influences the employment and the world of work in general (91% of the people using the Internet live in the North, one African out of forty has access to telephone ...).

The debates were also about the control over and possible legislation on the Internet. The poor interest in the Summit on the part of the leaders from the North weighed heavily on the results. As far as the regulatory role of the Internet is concerned, there is no clear answer yet. It is an established fact, though, that the South cannot develop without money. This time the civil society was invited to the debates. Let us hope that it was not for the last time! The trade union movement must mobilise more in the information society because the new technologies exert influence on the world of work. It must play a prominent part in closing the digital divide.

**USO OBTAINS MORE THAN 11% AT
SOCIAL ELECTIONS IN PUBLIC SERVICES**

The year 2003 ended very well for the «Union Sindical Obrera» (USO). Our

Spanish affiliate indeed got most satisfactory results at the latest social elections in the state administration. They got 11.14% of the votes, against 6.5% at the previous elections. The results of our Spanish organisation have constantly improved since the introduction of social elections for civil servants (1987). As from 1 January of this year, the USO will be present at all the bargaining forums for public services. We congratulate it

on its accomplishments and encourage it to proceed on this course. At the end of 2003, the USO conducted in Madrid a seminar on European works councils. The seminar was attended by USO activists who are works council members (Citroën, TUI, ...) as well as by Wim De Groof of the WCL and Geneviève Laforet (ACV-CSC from Belgium). Several working methods were proposed: give the Spanish organisations access to the information collected by the ACV-CSC, and give impetuses to the development of the European trade unions that have no sectoral organisations. The participants also discussed the contradiction between the commercials of companies and their attitude to the workers. In December the USO and the EZA also organised a seminar on the «Role of the social dialogue in the development of the social state in the European Union and Latin America». The European and Latin American trade union leaders conducted eminent debates and concluded that it was necessary to promote closer relations between the EU and Latin America.

ADDIS ABABA:

ILO AFRICAN REGIONAL MEETING

«Africa is seriously affected by famine, war, poverty, AIDS and child labour. We are convinced that these plagues can only be eradicated by promoting decent work. The international labour standards of the ILO will remain the spearhead in this», said Hervé Séa, representative of the World Confederation of Labour at the

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
Phone: 02/285.47.00
Fax: 02/230.87.22

E-mail:
info@cmt-wcl.org
Internet:
www.cmt-wcl.org

10th African regional meeting, which was held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) on 2-5 December last. The debates were centred on the social dialogue and the ILO, particularly the activities report of the Director General, a special session on the ILO's contribution to the preparations for the extraordinary Summit of heads of state and government of the African Union on employment and the struggle against poverty, and decent work for youths. Unfortunately, little time was spent on NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development), even if lots of African question this. The next African regional meeting is scheduled for 2007. Let us hope that by then all-out efforts will be made to ensure that development in Africa is no longer a utopia, but becomes a reality.

SEMINAR CISA-CMT ON GENDER EQUALITY

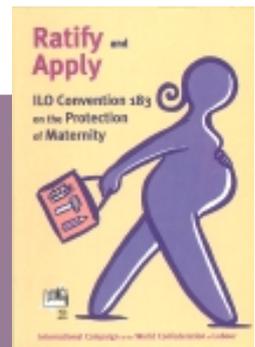


In the context of the cooperation between the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), particularly between the women's committees of both organisations, a women's seminar was held on 16-21 December with support from the ILO. Representatives from all over the world attended the seminar:

ICATU representatives from Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Tunisia, Palestine, Lebanon, Bahrain and Kuwait, and WCL representatives from Spain, Romania, Guinea, Indonesia, Peru and Morocco. The debates were about «*the impact of the policy of the financial and commercial institutions on the situation of women and the role of the ILO in the eradication of discrimination*». Also the negative impact of the structural adjustment programmes on women was an important subject for debate. According to Kattia Paredes, coordinator of the WCL Women and Work Department the seminar «*was for ICATU and WCL women's committees an opportunity to get acquainted and to exchange experiences on the way the gender concept is integrated into the international and national organisations*». «*We met the organisations of the ICATU and could deepen the contact*», she added. In their final declaration the participants calls on

the international financial institutions to pursue a socially just policy. The ILO is encouraged to step up the struggle against gender discrimination. The trade unions are called on to take women more into consideration at all policy levels. The Palestinian and Iraqi women called attention to their difficult situation and requested the WCL to express solidarity with their everyday struggle. Their request will certainly be complied with!

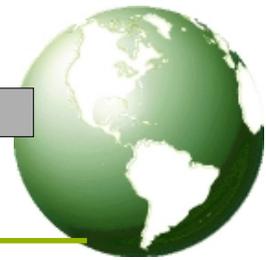
The WCL Women and Work Department continues to work for the ratification of ILO Convention 183, namely, the fundamental instrument aimed at protecting pregnant workers and their children.



Schedule of activities

- 01-06 February: Mission of the World² Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions (WFBW) – Congo
- 01-09 February: VERBA project: seminar on «Multinationals and privatisation», Lomé – Togo
- 02-06 February: Pan-African Trade Action Committee, Lomé – Togo
- 09-13 February: DOAWTU Executive Committee, Lomé – Togo
- 16-20 February: VERBA project: seminar on «Informal economy», Lomé – Togo
- 23-28 February: VERBA project: seminar on «Capacity building» – «Trade union themes», Bangkok – Thailand
- 25 February – 10 March: WCL-IIWE seminar on «Global Governance with social justice», Ter Nood / Overijse - Belgium.

**Please consult our annual schedule on:
www.cmt-wcl.org**



INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Shortly before the seasonal festivities, the WCL organised at the training centre Ter Nood (Belgium), in cooperation with the International Institute for Worker Education (IIWE) of the



ACV-CSC, an international seminar on the Informal Economy. Eighteen participants from fifteen countries worked through another decisive stage in the Informal Economy project of WCL Trade Action. Three-quarters of the participants had previously participated in one of the regional training seminars on the Informal Economy, organised by WCL Trade Action. These regional seminars had been enriching experiences for the participants, who seized them as an opportunity to share knowledge. The great diversity of theories on the Informal Economy made the debate rather stormy. Yet, eventually the seminar developed practical models and concrete recommendations by and for the WCL. Witness the Informal Economy projects in Belgium and the actions taken in favour of these workers, particularly by the ACV-CSC, the Informal Economy is irremediably gaining ground, also in Europe. This state of affairs requires an unambiguous response and a coordination between all the European trade unions.

At the Open Forum, which took place in Brussels on 10 December, the public services, the NGOs and the companies disclosed elements confirming our view on the current Informal Economy and justifying the continuation of the debate. A huge amount of work has been

accomplished and crucial stages have been worked through in the context of the Informal Economy programme. Though there is a long way to go and the challenges to take up are manifold, the resolutions of this seminar lead us to predict a very promising start of the year 2004.

FNSSM IN THE BREACH OF THE EMPLOYEES OF MACEDONIAN RAIL

The current privatisation of Macedonian Rail threatens to make 2000 employees redundant, but no social plan has been drawn up. According to the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Transport in Macedonia (FNSSM), affiliated to FIOST, these mass dismissals are the direct consequence of an ill-prepared privatisation and of

the insufficient social agreement concluded last year between the management of the railway company, the public authorities and the trade union SSM. This agreement indeed completely disregards the workers' interests. The FNSSM protested strongly against this state of affairs and demanded access to the meetings of the management. Because of the total absence of a reaction, the leaders organised a two-day strike. The dismissals are off now, but the management keeps concealing its future intentions. There was a step forward, though: the World Bank, the public authorities and the management allowed the delegates of the FNSSM to attend the working meetings on the company's privatisation. Despite the difficult economic and political context the FNSSM will continue to protect with determination the workers' interests.

WFCW URGES ROMANIAN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TO ENTER UPON A SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Following up on a report of the «*Federatia Sindicatelor din Asiguar si Banci*» (FSAB), the World Federation of Clerical Workers (WFCW) has revolted against the practices of two Romanian companies: SC Asigurarae



Romanesasca Plc and SC ASTRA Asigurare-Reasigurare Plc. Both companies refuse to enter upon a dialogue with the trade unions or to conclude collective agreements. Yet, ASIROM and THEMIS, the two FSBA unions active in these companies, fulfil all the basic conditions imposed on the social partners. The WFCW has denounced this state of affairs and pointed out that Romania has ratified the ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on the freedom of association and collective bargaining. If it wants to enter the EU, Romania should defend the principles of a democratic society. The WFCW has called on the Romanian authorities to mediate in this dispute. If the situation does not approve, an international protest action will be organised to force these companies to enter upon a social dialogue with the trade unions.

INTERNATIONAL MOBILISATION IN FAVOUR OF THE EUROPEAN MINERS

The European Foundation of Christian Miners, which is active as a «miners' section» within the World Federation of Industry Workers (WFIW) organised its annual General Assembly in December 2003 in La Louvière (Belgium). The members discussed the Foundation's medium-term tasks and activities. WFIW President Bart Bruggeman honoured the debates with his presence.



Today practically all the mines are closed, especially in Western Europe. A similar fate awaits the rare coalmines that are still open. In Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Romania and Poland, the mines are still very important, but the entry of these countries into the European Union may well mean the death-blow for the collieries. It is therefore a huge challenge for the Foundation to assist the miners' unions in developing a strategy against the impoverishment of their families, villages and towns. At the international level the

Foundation intends to support the activities of the WFIW to strengthen the miners' unions. In cooperation with the WFIW's regional organisations the Foundation will support seminars and other activities.

AFRICA IS READY TO LAUNCH THE ADDITIONAL «CAPACITY BUILDING» ACTIVITIES

The last training in the context of the «Capacity Building» programme of WCL Trade Action took place in Douala (Cameroon – Africa) on



24-28 November. Two trainers of the SBI training centre, Fatima El Amrani and Jacek Adamczyk, trained the twelve African trainees of the last group in trade union themes. The 24 trade union leaders of the eight selected African countries, as from now experts in trade union themes or organisational skills, are now in turn able to train new trainees in didactic skills. As from the beginning of 2004, these trainers will develop in full autonomy training programmes and activities per national team. Each of the countries of the programme will host fifteen training sessions spread over two and a half years. This boils down to 120 additional activities in all for the whole of the African continent! During the training in trade union themes, the trainers will teach the principles of social dialogue and bargaining, social security and pension systems. The training in organisational skills will be about trade union leadership, managerial skills, dues systems... The trainers will organise the activities per theme or per federation. We point out here that the suggestions for additional activities also stem from the federation, confederations and international trade federations of the WCL.