

**ACV-CSC WOMEN  
 STAND UP FOR EQUALITY**

The women in the «*Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond*» (ACV-CSC), our Belgian affiliate, are taking action in favour of gender equality. They are conducting a sensitisation action on



the occasion of the Belgian social elections, next May. So to ensure social peace, Belgium has developed a consultation system to protect the weakest, in which a consensus without state intervention is developed. During the social elections nearly 1.3 million workers in more than 6,000 Belgian companies will elect their representatives in the works councils and the committees for prevention and protection at work. Within the framework of the World Women's March (2003-2005) the ACV-CSC women have declared themselves willing to take up challenges such as the sensitisation of women and trade union activities on the occasion of actions and workshops. They also intend to sensitise youths and men on the gender issue. We deem it important to inform as many groups as possible so to raise the issue to the political level, says the ACV-CSC. Another challenge consists in giving concrete shape to the *emancipation economy*, an economy that benefits both North and South, a sustainable economy, an economy that takes the human being into consideration. We wish them every success with the realisation of these important challenges!

**CONTROVERSIAL IMF REPORT  
 ON EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL**

The leaders of the three large international trade unions – ETUC, WCL and ICFTU – have

expressed doubts about the conclusions of the very controversial IMF report, entitled «Unemployment and labour market institutions: why reforms pay off», on the European social model. This is understandable if you look at the Fund's

suggestions to reduce the European unemployment: «*The European countries just have to apply the market and competition regulations according to the American model*», in brief reduce the legal and social protection of the workers. They sent IMF Director General Horst Köhler a letter, wording their objections to the methodology of the report. They enclosed a document from Ronald Janssens and Andrew Watt, ETUC experts, who pointed out the shortcomings

of the IMF report. The Fund also challenged the role and acquirements of the European trade union movement, even if it cries out that the trade unions and the financial institutions are cooperating to stimulate economic growth and to combat poverty!!

**MURDERS OF TRADE UNION  
 LEADERS REMAIN TRAGIC REALITY!**

**Colombia, the list gets longer**

Colombia is notorious for the number of murders of trade union leaders. By a letter to Alvaro Uribe Velez, President of Colombia, the World Confederation of Labour has condemned the murder of Ricardo Barragan, leader of SINTRAEMCALI – the trade union of workers in the municipal companies of Cali. According to our source, Ricardo Barragan was shot down in Cali on 20 January. Enough reason to demand from the authorities to investigate this matter without delay and to make sure that this new act of violence against the trade union movement does not go unpunished as usual. The WCL has requested the President to make all-out efforts to start an investigation and to find and try the culprit. Let us hope that the request is complied with.

**Paraguay, ONAC mourns**

It is not only in Colombia that trade unionists

**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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are murdered. The World Confederation of Labour has learned of the murder of Mario Arzamendia and Carlos Robles Correa, both members of the «*Organizacion Nacional de Campesinos*» (ONAC) – national peasants’ organisation – a branch of our Paraguayan member organisation CNT. According to the human rights department of the CNT and the CLADEHLT (the Latin American Commission for the Rights and Freedoms of the Workers and Peoples), the murders were committed when the national police took action against peasants who took part in a peaceful march against the use of poisonous products in the region. During the police action, 26 people were arrested, a few got injured, and Arzamendia and Correa lost their lives. The WCL condemns these human rights violations and demands that the culprits are punished. It also insists on resuming the dialogue to solve the problem of the land division. In recent months it has brought up this matter several times with the Paraguayan government.

**Cambodia, murder of Chea Vichea, President of the FTUWKC**



Chea Vichea (36) was President of the «Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia» (FTUWKC) and a fervent advocate of the rights of the textile workers and of the human rights in general. In April last year, the FTUWKC filed an official complaint with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in protest against the dismissal of 30 workers on account of their role in creating trade unions in the private textile companies in which they were employed. As a

consequence, Chea Vichea himself was dismissed at the INSM factory and received several threats. Chea Vichea was also very active at the international level. He took part, for instance, in the policy programme of the CNV, our Dutch affiliate, with the Cambodian trade union movement. The WCL has condemned this murder strongly and demanded an immediate, thorough and independent investigation of the backgrounds of this crime. On 31 January, the Cambodian court of justice interrogated two young men of Cambodian origin, one of whom admitted he was the gunman...

**SERBIA: LABOUR MARKET REFORM AGAINST DECENT WORK!**

In December 2001, the Serbian government ratified a new labour code that caused resentment among the workers affiliated to the SSSS. They took a lot of actions in protest against this code. At the request

of this WCL affiliate, the Norm Department and Trade Action conducted jointly with Judit Czugler, Professor of international labour law and active member of the NFWC (Hungary), a thorough inquiry. A complaint was filed with the ILO Committee on the Freedom Of Association for violation of Conventions 87 and 98. Moreover, the ILO experts were informed that the new code failed to apply Conventions 14, 103, 106, 111, 131 and 158. Both procedures strengthen the aspects the workers’ organisations exposed during the debate on this case at the Committee on the Application of Standards during the International Labour Conference in June 2003.

**GENDER EQUALITY, ESSENTIAL FACTOR OF DEMOCRACY**

On 22-25 January last, BASE-FUT, the Portuguese extraordinary affiliate of the World Confederation of Labour, organised a European seminar on «Promote equality in diversity, the contribution of the workers’ movement to gender equality». The animated debates were attended by Kattia Paredes, head of the WCL Women and Work Department.

For further information on the seminar please contact: [kattia.paredes@cmt-wcl.org](mailto:kattia.paredes@cmt-wcl.org)

**Schedule of activities**

- 9-13 February: DOAWTU Executive Committee, Togo – Lomé;
- 16-20 February: Verba project: seminar Informal Economy, Togo – Lomé;
- 19-21 February: BATU-Congress on modification of the Statutes, Bangkok –Thailand;
- 23-28 February: Verba project: seminar Capacity Building – «Trade union themes», Bangkok –Thailand;
- 25 February –10 March: WCL-IIWE seminar on «World governance for social justice», Ter Nood/Overijse – Belgium
- 12-13 March: Ubuntu seminar – reform of the international institutions, Barcelona – Spain

**Please consult our annual schedule on: [www.cmt-wcl.org](http://www.cmt-wcl.org)**



## «ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS» TRAINING IN BANGKOK WAS A SUCCESS

On 19-23 January, Bangkok was the venue of the «Organisational Skills» training within the framework of the Capacity Building project of WCL Trade



Action. Twelve trade union officials from Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh took this course in trade union organisation methods. Several subjects were dealt with: dues systems, managerial skills, trade union policy and strategy, recruitment, creation of a mission and a vision... The twelve trainees had had a training in «Didactic Skills» already before. On 23-27 February, Bangkok will also be the venue of the last training in «Trade Union Themes». This training, too, will be attended by twelve participants from the above-mentioned countries. Then all the Asian trainers will have been trained and will be ready to start follow-up activities in the various countries. In Asia there will be 120 activities in all. In Africa, 120 projects will be implemented and 180 in Latin America.

## WFAFW RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REGULATIONS ON THE GMOs

Last year, the EU adapted its regulations with regard to the authorisation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). They regulate the traceability and labelling of GMOs as well as their ecological effects and risks. This adaptation may convey the impression that GMOs are now fully accepted and

can be used on a large scale in agriculture and the food chain, as if everything were under control... At its recent Congress in Madrid, the World Federation of Agriculture, Food, Hotel and Allied Workers (WFAFW) passed a number of resolutions on GMOs. These resolutions were presented to the European authorities. The WFAFW indeed takes the view that the new regulations overlook some important aspects. It has not been laid down, for instance, how contagion of non-manipulated crops can be avoided. The EU member states themselves are responsible for this, so that biotechnological companies and farmers who use transgenic (genetically manipulated) seeds can continue to «contaminate» crops in their country. Nor has it been laid down who will pay damages in case of contamination of crops elsewhere. The principle that «the polluter pays» will probably apply in this case, too. Also the application

of the regulations is questionable. They are not yet in force in Spain, for instance, and the registration of GMO fields will not be finished in the next few years. In other words, the European Union is far from prepared for a large-scale liberalisation of GMOs without jeopardising the further existence of a transgenic-free agriculture and food. In recent months, several European countries have taken initiatives to create GMO-free regions. To be continued.

## SWISS ROAD BUILDING PROJECT SUBJECT TO HEAVY CRITICISM...

Transfair, the Swiss affiliate of FIOST, has protested against the «Avanti» initiative, a public road building project that includes the building of a second Gotthard tunnel – under the Alps between Italy and Switzerland – and the extension of the motorway network. Transfair disagrees with this initiative as it runs counter to the Swiss transport policy. This policy is indeed aimed to shift the Transalpine freight transport more and more to the railway transport and to encourage public transport. The trade unions want to organise a plebiscite on counterproposals for the «Avanti» initiative. The voting will take place on 8 February. FIOST supports the demands of its affiliate.



### **BENGALESE TEXTILE WORKERS' FEDERATION TAKES ACTION**

In Bangladesh, more than 1.8 million people, 80% of whom women, are employed in the textile industry. The employers are not very particular about the ILO conventions on wages, public holidays and holidays. In some cases the wages of the women are even below the subsistence minimum. Because the employers generally prevent the creation of trade unions and the workers are afraid to lose their jobs, there is little protest against this state of affairs... That is why the Bengalese trade union BSSF, affiliated to the WCL, created the textile federation «*Bangladesh Sanjukta Garments Sramik Federation*» (BSGSF), which started in 2003 with 1,805 members. This trade union has already scored successes at the regional level. After a protest action the board of the Star Sweater Factory in Dhaka agreed to pay wage arrears, for instance. In addition, the management discussed with the trade union the other grievances of the staff. As a result, the unlawfully closed factory was reopened. In the Chittagong region the trade union is trying to push through a 12-point charter. It organised several meetings to inform the workers on the content of the charter and on their rights according to the ILO conventions. The BSGSF is trying to push through other demands as well by means of sit-ins, hunger strikes and organising human chains. The owners of the garment factories were requested to make Durgapyya a festive day (the workers are entitled to 10 fully paid holidays) and to observe six-hour working periods during the Ramadan.

### **EFA PROGRAMME PURSUES QUALITY EDUCATION**

During the second meeting of the «Education for All» (EFA) workshop, in September 2001 at the Paris-based UNESCO head office, the debates were about a new «Flagship Programme» on the teaching staff and the quality of education. On 28 November past, the partners involved – the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UNESCO, Education International (EI) and the WCT – signed a Memorandum of Understanding about the initial stage of the Flagship Programme. This memorandum will serve as a basis for inviting other parties to participate in the Programme, which will help countries to achieve their EFA goals by starting up or encouraging nationwide research work, policy analyses, technical support... Eventually teachers will feel more involved and play a more positive role in the achievement of quality education for all. In the short term, the programme has to lead to a better material and social status of teachers and to better teaching conditions. In the long term, the programme aims at universal access to education, a child-oriented teaching environment and the emergence of a teaching culture in schools and classes.



*Gaston De la Haye (General Secretary of the WCT) and Elie Jouen (Deputy Secretary of EI) sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the quality of education*

### **BULGARIA: HOST COUNTRY OF WFBW CONGRESS**

The WFBW is fully engaged in the preparations for its World Congress, which will assemble in the third week of May of this year. Bulgaria was chosen as the host country. With a view to these preparations, the WFBW recently conducted a mission to that country. For a few years the WFBW has had two member organisations in Bulgaria. These organisations are still developing, like the whole country is still developing for that matter. The country has a long but in some cases also very difficult history. During four hundred years, it bent under Turkish rule. Yet, this domination never struck at the roots of the Bulgarian culture. The country still has its own language. Bulgarian is one of the many Slavic languages spoken in the countries of Eastern Europe. The Bulgarian Cyrillic script is just like the Bulgarian language related to the Russian language. The Bulgarians share with the Russians and also with the Serbs the Orthodox Christian faith. Many absolutely beautiful churches and monasteries bear witness to this faith. The Bulgarian icons belong to the world's cultural treasures. Russia is still regarded as the liberator of Bulgaria. Russian armies defeated around 1870 the Turkish armies and made Bulgaria a sovereign country. The post-war communist dictatorship in Bulgaria, supported by the Russian Communist Party, has hardly changed this Russian liberator's status. Yet, it can be seen now that the country is more than ever oriented to Western Europe and that English is replacing Russian as the second language. The European Union views Bulgaria as a candidate member state for the year 2007.