

APPLICATION FOR AFFILIATION OF UGPL

Following the application for affiliation of the *Union Générale des Producteurs de Libye*, a WCL delegation led by Deputy Secretary General Eduardo Estevez, has visited the organisation. Many contacts were established,



Committee met at its head office in Lomé, Togo, in the presence of Basile Mahan Gahé and Willy Thys, the respective President and Secretary General of WCL. The Committee adopted the activities and financial reports for 2003 and approved the plan of action for 2004. As

regards the current events, the debates were centred on two major themes, AIDS and NEPAD. We point out that two more women now sit on the Committee. BATU, the Asian regional WCL organisation, organised its Convention on 19-23 February. The Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists was renamed Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions. The Convention adopted many modifications to the Statutes. Willy Thys, who attended the meeting, is pleased with the better functioning of our regional organisation thanks to the adoption of

these new Statutes.

For further information please contact BATU at: necielucero@eastern.com

«THE GLOBALISATION CAN AND MUST CHANGE!»

This is one of the affirmations in the much-expected report the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation published on 24 February last. ILO created this Commission in February 2002 as an independent body to satisfy the needs of all those who have to face the «*unprecedented changes the globalisation has introduced in their lives and in society*». The report, which will no doubt stick in the memories, is entitled: «*A fair globalisation: creating opportunities for all*». According to the authors, the globalisation represents a huge potential and has offered many advantages, favoured the opening of economies and societies and encouraged the free trade in goods, ideas and knowledge. Yet, they also write that «*the present functioning of the global economy suffers from firmly fixed and persistent imbalances that are ethically unacceptable and politically untenable (...)*. For the majority of the women and men, the globalisation has fallen short of their expectation in their simple and legitimate pursuit of decent work and a better future for their children». This is very much the position of WCL, which is not against globalisation as such, of course, but

particularly with leaders of the Confederation and a number of trade federations such as wood and building, telecommunications, transport and oil. The delegation also met the leaders of the Women Workers' Department. After having analysed the economic evolution and its impact on the Libyan workers and women workers since 1969, both delegations discussed the trade union movement in Libya and its role in the current economic opening and the country's entry into the free market and the economic globalisation. The strong point of the meeting was no doubt the examination of the possible cooperation relations between WCL and the Libyan trade union to take up the challenges of the current economic process. WCL has indeed a lot of experience with the defence and strengthening of the workers' and women workers' rights throughout the world, particularly in a context of wild privatisation. The delegation noted an active presence of the Libyan trade union in the international trade union movement through OATUU, ICATU and USTMA. The delegation assessed the contacts in a positive way. It will submit a report to the competent WCL bodies that are to decide on the application for affiliation.

STATUTORY MEETINGS, NEW STATUTES FOR BATU, AND WOMEN ARE STRENGTHENED AT DOAWTU

On 11-13 February, the DOAWTU Executive

TELE-FLASH

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against its neo-liberal interpretation. In any case, we strongly recommend reading this report.

For further information please contact ILO at www.ilo.org or our permanent representative in Geneva at: herve.sea@cmt-wcl.org

WTO: OBSERVER'S STATUS GRANTED TO IRAQ

At its first meeting early in February in Geneva, the General Council of the World Trade Organisation – WTO – granted Iraq the observer's status. On the other hand, there is no news about the outcome of the examination of Iran's application for membership. Yet, the European Union, supported in this by a dozen countries including China, Venezuela and Switzerland, takes the view that Iran meets the requirements to negotiate its membership of WTO. As far as the date of the next Ministerial Conference of WTO, the United States tried to advance the meeting in 2004, but there was no consensus about this. Another important point was that Australia and the United States announced that they would conclude a free trade agreement covering fields like agriculture, investments, pharmaceutical products, services, public markets and production. The absence of a special chapter on environmental issues was strongly criticised. In conclusion, sixteen southern and West African countries, ACP members, started official trade negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union, under the aegis of WTO. Whereas the European Commission and several African ministers are pleased with these negotiations, many civil society groups have protested against the possible negative effects on the African population, which is already in a very poor condition.

For any additional information on WTO, please contact our Socio-Economic Department: ramon.vivanco@cmt-wcl.org

SGP: STOCK-TAKING FOR SRI LANKA AND BELARUS

The system of generalised preferences – SGP – provides for reduced customs tariffs on imports from many developing countries. Last January the European Commission – considering that Sri Lanka could show signs of a better application of the core standards as defined by ILO – decided to grant this country additional tariff preferences. European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy explained this: «*The situation is not yet ideal and must be monitored, of course, but these signs are encouraging for the future*». The new trade regime will be assessed halfway on the situation of the standards. WCL, ICFTU and ETUC will be involved in this assessment, in close cooperation with NWC and other Sri Lankan trade unions.

At the same moment, however, the European Commission, addressed by WCL, ICFTU and ETUC, decided to make inquiries into the situation of the basic rights in Belarus. The results of this inquiry should lead to a temporary withdrawal of the SGP, which would be particularly justified in this country where trade union activities are limited and trade union leaders and other activists are systematically repressed.

WCL DENOUNCES TRADE UNION

RIGHTS VIOLATION IN SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

After an urgent action on the initiative of the Standards

Department for Africa (DOAWTU) and WCL, a campaign was launched to demand the suspension of several articles in the labour code of Sao Tome and Principe because they violate the freedom of association and the right to strike. Sao Tome and Principe has plentiful natural resources. According to WCL, the new foreign investments that could flow into the country would make it possible to create a large number of jobs. Yet, these jobs can only develop in a context that is fully respectful of the basic workers' rights. WCL will keep an eye on the evolution of the situation so to be able to ensure, in the near future, full respect for the rights of the workers and their representatives in this country. The campaign got social support from many DOAWTU affiliates.

JOURNALISTS IN DIFFICULTY IN URUGUAY

The World Confederation of Labour, upon information from CLADEHLT, has reacted against the exactions against journalists working for the newspaper *La República*. The employees have occupied the newspaper's offices since the night of 21 January. Intimidation, threats and plain dismissals are at the root of this situation. By letter to the Uruguayan authorities WCL demanded that the management and the workers' representatives enter upon a dialogue, the repression against the employees of *La República* stop, the wrongful dismissals be undone and an atmosphere of full respect for the freedom of association be promoted at the newspaper *La República*.

Schedule of activities

- 25 February - 10 March: WCL-IIWE Seminar on «*Good governance for more social justice*», Ter Nood/Overijse – Belgium;
- 11-13 March: PEO/Cyprus: 24th Congress, Nicosia – Cyprus;
- 12-17 March: CROC/Mexico: Congress, Mexico – Mexico;
- 12-13 March: UBUNTU, Seminar on future scenarios for reforms of the international institutions, Barcelona – Spain;
- 14-17 March: BSSF/Bangladesh: Congress, Dhaka – Bangladesh;
- 15-19 March: Trade Action, seminars on informal economy and multinationals, Bangkok – Thailand
- 18-20 March: ICL: 8th National Conference, Vishakhapatnam – India;
- 18-20 March: European Section + seminar on European works councils, Brussels – Belgium;
- 22-26 March: ILO, Governing Body, Geneva – Switzerland;
- 28-29 March, WCL, Executive Committee, Brussels – Belgium
- 31 March, Round Table on the DOAWTU action programme for 2004-2007, Brussels – Belgium.

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



INFORMAL ECONOMY: ISSUE AT THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

As usual, a WCL delegation took part in the World Social Forum, which was held early this year in Mumbai (India). One of the delegation members was Wim De Groof, coordinator of the Informal Economy project of WCL Trade Action. That is what he told us: «Fortunately, during the Forum in Mumbai the informal economy issue regularly came up for discussion. Several workshops debated on the importance of organisations – from associations over cooperatives to trade unions – which stand up against abuses and the exploitation of the informal economy workers. Many of those present again pointed out the role of the trade union movement, and there was a strong plea for cooperation. Indeed, without a structured trade union action with national as well as international resolution, good initiatives of NGOs in favour of the non-unionised workers in the informal economy risk disappearing. On the other hand, trade unions can learn a lot from the specific approach of NGOs to the informal economy. Their views on membership, action, organisational strengthening and training can be very useful in the trade union movement, provided that they are slightly adjusted». So, in order to improve the living and working conditions of the informal economy workers, it is important that NGOs and trade unions, each in their specific fields, join hands: «Together strong against injustice!».

FIOST SUPPORTS MACEDONIAN RAILWAYMEN

The staff of Macedonian Rail are on strike because their unions are by no means involved in the forthcoming privatisation and restructuring of the company. The workers have still not received their wages of the past three months and their last year's holiday pay. Moreover, 900 of them are threatened with dismissal. The Board of Directors want to deliberate the mass redundancies without consultations with the Independent Trade Union of Rails Workers in Macedonia (NSZM). Upon this, the Union has called a general strike, which gets support from FNSSM – an affiliate of FIOST (WCL) – and other railway unions. Basing itself on the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, FIOST has called upon the Macedonian government to restore without delay the social dialogue with the trade unions.

WFBW GIVES TRAINING IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN SERBIA

In February started the training seminars for the Serbian trade unions in the building, road building and wood sectors. They are organised with support from the World



Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions (WFBW), ACV *Bouw en Industrie* (Belgium) and CNV *Hout- en Bouwbond* (the Netherlands). The first seminar was about collective bargaining and bargaining techniques. The around thirty participants got information about the European social dialogue and the collective agreement model, and they discussed the Serbian model. It became clear during the seminar that the Serbian government usually used the social dialogue to convince in a monologue the workers of its right. The new Labour Bill threatens to make things even worse. That is why the trade unions jointly with WCL have filed a complaint with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The knowledge acquired during the seminars will help the trade unions develop new strategies and structures to protect the workers' interests. Indeed, today the workers are still confronted with non-observance of collective agreements, non-payment of wages, closedowns of factories without a social plan... The training must ensure an uplevelling of the social developments in the country, so that a further integration into the European community becomes possible.

INDONESIAN INDUSTRY WORKERS STAND UP FOR THEIR RIGHTS

At the industrial company «PT Swadaya Agung Perkasa» in Jakarta (Indonesia) the management raised the wages from 3,500 to 5,000 Indonesian Rupiahs. At the same time, however, the workers lost their usual allowances. Because the workers were not informed of this wage measure and the management refused each consultation with the trade union, Lomenik SBSI



– affiliated to the World Federation of Industry Workers (WFIW) – called a strike on 3 February. Instead of entering upon a social dialogue, the management led up to a police intervention. Because the workers and the trade union stood their ground, the management closed the company. On 10 February, action was taken in front of the head office of the National Human Rights Commission, upon which the factory was reopened. But the 64 members of Lomenik SBSI were fired then and there. Lomenik SBSI immediately started a protest action and solidarity campaign. WFIW supports this campaign and has written letters of protest to the employer, the Minister of Employment and the National Human Rights Commission, demanding respect for the basic workers' rights, a dialogue with the workers and the re-employment of the dismissed trade union leaders.

HOW FREE ARE TRADE UNIONS IN THE EU?

At the end of January, the leaders of six Christian trade unions from four EU member states (CNV *Bedrijvenbond & Dienstenbond* from the Netherlands, CFTC from France, DKF from Denmark and CGB *Metall* from Germany among others) sat down at the table to discuss «Freedom of Association in Europe». There seem to exist strong differences between the EU states. In Denmark, for instance, the closed shop system has a restrictive effect. Indeed, collective agreements are being concluded which provide that applicants for jobs must be affiliated to the trade union «*Landsorganisationen i Sverige*» (LO), which curtails the free choice of the workers. In Germany, a labour court can deny trade unions the right to conclude collective agreements even if the freedom of association and collective bargaining is a constitutional right. The situation in France is more hopeful: its Constitution mentions five trade union tendencies so that the trade unions can properly protect the interests of their workers. The situation in the Netherlands is almost ideal: the three current trade union tendencies seek a consensus, and the Ministry of Labour recognises the collective agreements concluded that way, so that they apply to all the workers. The participants in this round table decided to turn to the EU, requesting for still this year an agreement on a European Constitution that gives workers the right to join a trade union on a voluntary basis and grants trade unions equal rights to take action.

WCT ACTIVE IN THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

Ever since November 2002, WCT has been active in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). At the invitation of Koichiro Matsuura (Director General of UNESCO) and Mr Adama Samassekou (Chairperson of the

WSIS Preparatory Committee), WCT coorganised a «world wide web discussion», during which citizens could give an input to the WSIS. Later on, WCT also attended several preparatory meetings and the Intersessional Meeting in Paris. This intensive participation enabled WCT to submit a few declarations and to carry through several amendments to the texts. That way, the specific role of education in the knowledge society and the changing role of teachers became main points in the declaration and plan of action of the WSIS. WCT stresses its commitment to build a comprehensive and development-oriented information society in which the human being is the centre. The integration of modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) is viewed as an instrument and not as an aim in itself. The information society must ensure, further, that women gain more power, just like marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Please surf for further information to www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi-en-1161|1160.asp or contact the WCT secretariat at wct@cmt-wcl.org

CAPACITY BUILDING: FIRST FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

On 3-4 February, Cape Town (South Africa) was the venue of the first follow-up activity under the Capacity Building project of WCL; During two days, the Capacity Building trainers of the South African federation UASA trained and informed trade union officials from various sectors. The training was centred on trade union items like bargaining, but also on strengthening the trade union structure through marketing and recruitment, for instance. Also the



complaints structure and the labour code were dealt with. The course was attended by 58 trainees, among whom eight women. The Chief Executive Officer of UASA, Koos Bezuidenhout, was also present at the training. He addressed the participants and encouraged them by calling them the «*ears, eyes and mouth of the trade union*». The trade union officials will attend before long more specific training sessions.