

**WCL ENTERS INTO OFFICIAL  
NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ICFTU**

During its 209th Confederal Board held last October at Casablanca, Morocco, WCL Secretary General officially received the mandate to enter into negotiations with the International Confederation of Free Trade unions, ICFTU, the other international democratic trade union with the view to creating a new world trade union organisation. These negotiations are taking place between the Secretaries General of the two organisations and the follow-up will be done by the Executive Committee. With regard to the WCL, it will hold a first meeting on 4 and 5 February next year. A meeting of the Confederal Board is scheduled for 25 - 26 May in Geneva. This new

organisation would be opened to other democratic and independent organisations that are not affiliated to WCL nor ICFTU. These formal negotiations are therefore about to commence and the WCL expresses the wish that they lead to the strengthening of trade unionism. «*It is important for the trade union world to question itself on its mode of operation*», declared Willy Thys, WCL Secretary General. «*The international situation and the extent of neo-liberal globalisation have brought about an evolution in which the rights of workers are increasingly trampled upon. It is therefore indispensable that trade unions strengthen themselves to defend better the rights of workers and promote social justice, without which democracy is only an utopia*».

**AVERAGE WORKING TIME VARIES  
FROM ONE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRY  
TO ANOTHER**

The International Labour Office, ILO has published a new study: «*Working Time and Workers' Preferences in Industrialized Countries: Finding the Balance*» According to the study, there appears to be a substantial difference between the number of hours put in by workers and the number they would want or need to do. «*Certain categories of workers put in an 'excessively' high number of hours, whilst, at the same time, other categories think they do not do enough*», explained Jon Messenger, the ILO expert charged with the publication of the book. As a matter of fact, the figures speak volumes. Since



the end of the 90s, the number of people who work more than 50 hours per week in the United States and Australia has risen from 15% to 20%. There is also a sharp increase in New Zealand and Japan, 21.3% and 28.1% respectively. On the contrary, in many countries of the European Union, the percentage increase does not exceed 10%. The countries with the lowest percentage are the Netherlands, Ireland and Greece. The United Kingdom however is an exception where 15.5% of the active population work 50 hours or more per week. According to the ILO, this variation is explained by the fact that countries with a high percentage have fewer regulations on working hours. On the contrary, where part-time work is common practice, it is not rare to see workers endure insufficient working hours as well as part-time work in bad health and retirement conditions or part-time work that is not the choice of workers who could otherwise work full time. To find a balance between the needs of workers and the demands of the business world, the ILO study stated that there is the need for a policy on working hours in 5 areas: the promotion of health and security, assistance to workers in order to improve the family situation, encouraging gender equality,

**CLAUDE ROLIN WILL BE THE  
NEXT SECRETARY GENERAL OF CSC**

Claude Rolin will succeed Josly Piette for the post of Secretary General of the CSC, our affiliated organisation in Belgium. The national office of the Belgian trade union organisation elected him with 85% of votes. He is expected to take up the post in January 2006. It must be noted in fact, that at CSC, the time bet-

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Responsible editor:  
Willy Thys  
Information officer:  
Mathieu Debroux.

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**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

improving productivity and finally, facilitating workers' choice and their influence on working hours.

### **OBSTACLES HINDERING IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDITION OF WOMEN**

Last 12 October, women's representatives from the Great Lakes region met during the African Regional Conference in Kigali. Women's representatives came from Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and also Rwanda. The aim of this meeting was to focus on the evolution in the life of African women since the Beijing Summit which was devoted to women six years ago. Parliamentarians, entrepreneurs from the private sector, NGOs and representatives of regional and international organisations also participated in the discussions. The Kenyan, Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Winner, was given a lengthy acclamation.



She is the first woman to win the prize. That undoubtedly underlines the increasingly important role that women play in national and international politics in Africa in particular. Despite everything, a lot of effort remains to be put in towards the improvement of the condition of women in Africa. Inadequate education, poverty, especially in the rural areas, vulnerability with regards to HIV/AIDS, and difficult access to employment are however the factors hindering this improvement. The declaration issued at the end of the Conference insists on a series of measures to be put in place over a period of five years to «promote gender equality and equity in Africa». Among the latter, we stress the need for African States to draw up policies of positive discrimination or to strengthen those that exist in order to facilitate access of women and children to education and to keep them in school. WCL supports this measure. As a matter of fact, education is an essential factor in poverty reduction.

### **A NEW TRADE UNION ORGANISATION IN LATIN AMERICA**

We have recently participated in the creation of a new trade union organisation, FELATRACS – *Federación Latinoamericana de Trabajadores de la Comunicación Social* (Federation of Latin-American Social Communication Workers). According to its new leaders, this organisation is born with the hope to unite all social communicators. This movement is therefore established by the will of trade unionists from more than 15 countries. The constituent Congress took place last 8 October at the head office of the national association of journalists from Peru. «*We have reached the end of the first stage*», declared Roberto Mejía, newly elected President of FELATRACS. «*We must continue the long march of the social struggle for improvement in the living and working conditions of workers. We are beginning a new management in this difficult moment for humanity*». Another significant point discussed during the Congress was the place of the youth in the new trade union structure. A sensitive point no doubt, it shows the willingness of FELACTRAS to face the future. The Congress denounced, among others, repression and attacks

on press freedom in the region, pointing out that it would never accept a world of silence. For the WCL, the creation of a democratic trade union organisation is always positive. Trade unions are defenders of workers whose rights are unfortunately trampled upon too often.

### **WORKERS' ACTION IN MOROCCO BROKEN UP**

The *Confédération Démocratique du Travail*, CDT (Democratic Workers' Confederation) one of our two affiliated organisations in Morocco, the other is UGTM, informed us about the extremely serious events taking place in Morocco. Since the end of 2002, workers and officials of the D'Imini Mines, of the Moroccan company for mining studies (SACEM) were involved in a «sit-in» in front of the local office at Ougoug. They were protesting against the decision of the company to institute part-time work with 50% salary reduction. In April 2004, explains CDT, 120 persons unknown to the mine attacked 148 members of the trade union and broke up the «sit-in» Complaints were made against several of these workers and some of them were arrested. They have still not been released. WCL is worried about the situation and the methods used to break up the action of the

workers, which constitutes a serious violation of trade union rights. Moreover, it is a legitimate action against illegal decisions of the company. In a letter addressed to the authorities of the country, WCL is asking for the immediate and unconditional release of the mine workers detained in the Ouarzazate prison since the month of July. International trade union hopes that everything will be done to prove the innocence of the mine workers and reveal the identity of the attackers. This reminds us once again of the dangerous nature of the work of trade unionists.

#### **Schedule of activities**

##### **November**

- 15-18: ILO – Governing Body (Geneva);
- 19-21: World Social Forum International Council – Seminar on the UN (Padua / Italy);
- 21-27: CLAT Congress (Brazil);
- 26-27: ELA (Spanish Basque Country) – 11<sup>th</sup> Congress (Bilbao).

##### **December**

- 01-04: IFTC - seminar (Mulhouse / France);
- 02-04: Serbia Mission (Brussels / Belgium);
- 03-04: HIVA/EZA – Seminar on « Expansion of the EU and social inclusion» (Sofia / Bulgaria);
- 09-12: European Women's' Conference (Cyprus);
- 10: European Social Observatory – 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary (Brussels / Belgium);
- 13-14: OECD – *China Seminar on "Social Responsible Investment in North-East Asia. The Role of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises"* (Beijing - China).



# Trade Action

## NO REASON FOR JOY ON WORLD FOOD DAY

The 16th of October is the World Food Day of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). This year's theme is 'Biodiversity for Food Security'. On this



occasion José Gomez Cerda, Secretary General of FELTRA, goes into the growing food insecurity worldwide. Whereas in the rich countries the emphasis is more and more on healthy food, in reaction to recent events (dioxin crisis, foot-and-mouth epidemic, mad cow disease, GMOs), hunger and undernourishment continue to take a heavy toll in the poorer countries. Over one billion people are living in poverty, half of them in hunger, and in many cases it has come to chronic undernourishment. *"This food insecurity is due to an unequal distribution of the wealth, to the fast increase in population, to a lack of jobs in the poorest sectors, to environmental problems and to disturbances"*, says José Gomez Cerda. A growth of the agricultural sector is in his opinion one of the possible solutions: *"It could bring about a balanced and harmonious food supply. Moreover, it can lead to more jobs, higher incomes for farming families and more stability"*. During the world food conferences of 1996 and 2002, the world leaders committed themselves to reducing the number of people suffering hunger to 400 million by 2015. At the current pace, a decrease by eight million a year, this is not on the cards. *"Food security therefore remains a very important issue!"* concludes José.

## PRESS AND PUBLICITY TRAININGS TERMINATED

The last 'Press & Publicity' training, organised in the context of the VERBA project of WCL Trade Action, was held in Costa Rica on 13-18 September. In all, over 100 trade unionists in Africa, Asia and Latin America were trained. In cooperation with the Capacity Building

trainers and the 'informal economy' and 'multinationals' contacts, these press officers will approach the media to call attention to the trade union action of their federations. They will do this by spreading press statements or by organising press conferences among other things.

As regards the 'Capacity Building' project part, there were already successful follow-up trainings in Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, Benin, Senegal, Brazil, Paraguay, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Indonesia. The trainers and the federations developed the programmes on the basis of the real needs of the local trade union representatives. There were, for instance, trainings on CBAs, membership recruitment, the democratic structure of the trade union, safety and health at work, social security, the necessity of paying membership dues, etc.

## DHL STAFF PROTESTED IN BRUSSELS

In Belgium the DHL group employs 6,000 workers. Half of them work in the sorting centre of the courier service at Zaventem airport (Belgium). Several thousands of jobs more are directly or indirectly dependent on the presence of the courier service at the airport. The complete or partial disappearance of DHL from Zaventem would be a third social disaster in Belgium in less than ten years, after the closure of Renault Vilvoorde and the bankruptcy of Sabena. That is why the trade unions and the airport organised at the end of October a 'March for Jobs' in Brussels. The trade union front protests against the failure of the expansion plans and demands political efforts to guarantee job security for all the workers, not only in the next four years but also after 2008. They radically reject a longer-term shrinkage scenario for the DHL hub in Zaventem. A stable legal framework must be created to guarantee the present and future economic activities of DHL and other companies. On the occasion of the demonstration, the Flemish and Brussels governments announced a round table with employers, workers and environmental groups on the future of Zaventem airport.

## INFORMAL ECONOMY WORKERS ARE ENTITLED TO SOCIAL PROTECTION!

From 29 November to 3 December, Social Alert will organise – in cooperation with WCL, WSM, the International Young Christian Workers, Pax Christi International and the World Movement of Christian Workers – a seminar on "Towards social protection for informal economy workers".

The vast majority of the informal economy workers cannot fall back on any form of social protection or social security. Within the framework of the VERBA Informal



Economy programme of WCL Trade Action, some trade unions are already working very concretely on the improvement of this situation. Their initiatives certainly deserve our support and attention. *"The seminar will even go a step further"*, says Wim De Groof, coordinator of the WCL informal economy project: *"The right to social protection is not only a labour right, but a human right! It is therefore important for trade unions and other social organisations to combine forces and to conduct joint campaigns"*.

### **ABOLITION OF QUOTAS IN TEXTILE SECTOR HOLDS RISKS FOR WORKERS**



On 1 January 2005, the 'Multi-Fibre Agreement' (1973) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will come to an end. The agreement provided that clothes from low-wage countries were subjected to fixed import quotas and to high import tariffs. This 'protective' measure enabled the West to preserve a considerable textile industry while it provided each textile producing developing country with a limited

but guaranteed outlet. It is expected that the abolition of the quotas will cause a strong increase in the market share worldwide of textile giants like China and India. In other words, the competition will become harsh, not only for the western textile market but certainly also for the developing countries in which the textile industry account for 70-90% of the total exports in some cases. The International Federation Textile and Clothing (IFTC) therefore calls attention to the serious consequences of the abolition of the textile quotas. The number of jobs that will perish in the textile and clothing sector worldwide has been estimated at over 20 million. The effects will be chiefly felt in Asia (Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), Central America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, and North Africa (and Mauritius). IFTC also fears that the wage will go further down, that subcontracting and informalisation will rise strongly and that multinationals will relinquish their responsibility for the workers.

During the Confederal Board of WCL (October – Casablanca), IFTC therefore called for joint action. The European Union will be asked to focus on the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries when revising the trade preferences. At the same time the EU should support countries in the adaptation of the textile and clothing industry. Such a social commitment is also expected from the WTO, in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). IFTC demands, further, that the concluded trade agreements include a social clause that is based on the basic workers' rights and the ILO conventions.

### **TRADE FEDERATION OF RUSSIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION AFFILIATES TO WFIW**

For two years there has been a cooperation agreement between the World Federation of Industry Workers (WFIW) and CC STEINR, an organisation of workers from the nuclear sector within the Russian Federation. Through this agreement both organisations wanted to get better acquainted with each other and each other's activities. CC STEINR has always occupied a special place within the Russian trade union movement. Fact is that the Soviet government was very sensitive to the activities in the nuclear sector, which found expression in all kinds of security measures and 'secrets'. In Russia nearly 5 million workers are still working and living a dozen so-called closed cities, which can be visited only with a special visa. Despite these national sensitivities CC STEINR has always pursued, worldwide, better relations with other trade unions from the sector. The cooperation with IFTC is a good example of this. During a mission of a WFIW delegation to Moscow, early in October, this cooperation has been evaluated as positive. WFIW President Bart Bruggeman and CC STEINR international secretary Kalenik even signed an application for affiliation of CC STEINR to WFIW. This makes WFIW the first international trade federation of WCL to have a future affiliate of the Russian trade union federation.

### **WFBW AND IFBWW PROTEST AGAINST BAD WORKING CIRCUMSTANCES DURING RENOVATION WORKS OF ANGKOR WAT**

On 14 October, representatives of the World Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions – WFBW, affiliated to WCL) and of the International Federation of Building and Woodworkers – IFBWW, affiliated to ICFTU) took joint action in favour of the project workers involved in the renovation of Angkor Wat, the famous Cambodian temple complex. Since 1994 more than 500 people have worked on the reconstruction and renovation of the Buddhist and Hindu temples. In 1992 the temple complex was put on the world heritage list of UNESCO. The Cambodian Construction Trade Union Federation (CCTUF), which was created two years ago, tries to unite the people involved in the temple renovation projects. In the meantime, four unions have become active in the complex. Though they are representative in Cambodia, the management refuses to bargain with the organisations or to recognise them. A UNESCO representative in Cambodia has stated that *"no trade unions need to be active in the Angkor projects because these specialised renovation organisations are non-profit organisations by nature"*. Klaus Wiesebugel, acting President of IFBWW, finds this statement ridiculous, as UNESCO has the legal and moral responsibility to promote international and universal labour regulations and values like those of ILO. In other words, the workers are entitled to social protection and solid collective bargaining agreements. The fact that the Cambodian trade union movement is not having an easy time also became obvious a few months with the murder of two of its prominent leaders. With their visit to Angkor Wat, IFBWW and WFBW expressed their solidarity with the Cambodian trade unions in their struggle for recognition.