

PLAN OF ACTION OF G8 AIMED TO CANCEL DEBT OF POOREST COUNTRIES

On 4 and 5 February last, London hosted the ministers of Economy and Finance of the very powerful G8, which is composed of the most industrialised and most powerful countries of the planet (United States, Canada, Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Japan and Russia). The meeting ended on a



positive note. The G8 members agreed to draw up a plan of action aimed at the full cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries, at an increase in development aid and at better access to the markets of the North for the countries in the South. This political will is no doubt encouraging. Nevertheless, let us wait for the implementation of the plan of action before totally rejoicing. The World Confederation of Labour hopes that this agreement will also lead to solutions for the rest of the indebted countries. The solution G8 advocates is indeed an intermediate step, but it does not settle the problem of the bilateral debt to the private actors (London Club). In the view of the WCL, the most efficient way to eradicate poverty is to annul the foreign debt and to create a social development fund, to promote fair trade, to raise the cooperation and development aid, to promote decent employment and to respect the core labour standards promoted by the ILO. The traditional spring meetings with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank will no doubt be a means to highlight the debt issue!

DECEASE OF ALFRED BUHAGIAR

It is with deep sadness that we learned, on

3 February last, of the sudden decease of Alfred Buhagiar, President of the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU), our Maltese affiliate. Mr Buhagiar was a teacher by profession. He was President of the Maltese teachers' federation for over 22 years and of the CMTU for eight years. He was no doubt one of the great trade unionists on the island. Very active at the international and at the national level, Alfred Buhagiar was member of the Economic and Social Development Council of Malta and of the Centre for the Development of Worker Participation. He sat on the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation and on the Social Security for Migrant Workers Committee of the European Commission. We offer his family, his next of kin and his colleagues our sincere condolences.

BORDERS ARE BRIDGES TO INTEGRATION!

"Borders are bridges to integration, no walls of division!" Such was the reaction of the CLAT – our regional organisation in Latin America, to the recent differences between Colombia and Venezuela. In a declaration the CLAT has strongly



condemned any form of terrorism, emanating whether from people, groups, organisations or states. The regional organisation also disapproved of economic and legal violence against the basic workers' rights. It advocates sovereignty of nations and self-determination of peoples as well as the preservation and full observance of international law. Moreover, the CLAT deems it essential to make all-out efforts for the development of Latin America, and it is pleased with the efforts in favour of the CAN (Andean Community), MERCOSUR and the creation of the South American Community of Nations. The World Confederation of Labour fully agrees with its Latin American regional organisation. Latin America and the Caribbean is indeed a region marked by

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great social injustice, in which exploitation, poverty and social exclusion keep growing. That is why we have to stress the struggle of the CLAT for democracy, social justice and the integration of the workers and peoples into the Latin American community. **For the complete text of the declaration:** www.clat.org

WAGES REMAIN UNEQUAL IN SPAIN

According to the Spanish branch of the temping agency Manpower, women would earn 34.7 percent on average less than men for the same work. This difference goes up to 50 percent if one looks at the private sector only. On



the other hand, the wage inequality in the public sector amounts to 10.7 percent. The study highlights that more women than men are active in the public sector, that their qualifications are higher, that there are less strongly present in senior functions... Another important element is that the wage differences in the private sector are lower as the training levels are higher: high-qualified women earn

44 percent less than men, low-qualified women 56 percent less. Lastly, Manpower explains, working hours are one of the important factors that explain the wage inequality between men and women in Spain: In 35-39-hour working weeks, the wages of men are 16 percent higher. This difference is considerably stronger in (+)45-hour working weeks. Wage equity is a basic right, ILO sets forth in its Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Lack of awareness and understanding of gender-based wage discrimination considerably impedes the achievement of wage equity. The WCL, which works actively on the promotion of gender equality, including in its own structures, recognises that it is essential to build the capacity of the trade union movement in this matter, if one wants justice and democracy to guide the functioning of our organisations and societies.

DENUNCIATIONS

Morocco: Condemnation after a strike in the mines of Imini

In December 2002, the workers and executives of the mines of Imini in Morocco, a branch of the SACEM (*société anonyme chérifienne d'études minières*), started a sit-in in front of the head office in protest against measures to introduce standards on part-time work along with a 50-percent wage



reduction. In April 2004, several activists of our Moroccan affiliate CDT were attacked, and the sit-in was broken. Some of the activists were arrested. During their trial five workers were condemned to a ten-year prison sentence. A fifth worker would have got a fine of 1,000 dhs. In a message to the authorities of the country, WCL Secretary

General Willy Thys insisted on measures to guarantee full respect for the freedom of association and for the ILO conventions 87 and 98. He also demanded the release of the arrested trade union leaders and workers. If necessary, the facts will be brought immediately to the notice of the ILO.

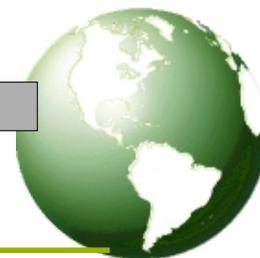
Mexico: Continental Tyres reacts to our trade union campaign

After a meeting, in Brussels, with a delegation of workers and trade union leaders of a Mexican daughter of the multinational Continental Tyres, the WCL, with the active support of CENPROS, intervened on 9 July 2004 with the Mexican authorities and the management of the multinational, pointing out three alternative solutions for the labour dispute in the company. This dispute had indeed resulted in the close-down of the company and the dismissal of the workers. The company reacted immediately to our request. Thanks to the international pressure, an agreement has enabled the implementation of one of the options advanced by the trade union Euskadi, namely the resumption of the operations by a tyre-production cooperative. The cooperative will be officially started up on 25 February next. We will be present at this event to reiterate the importance of inter-union solidarity in defence of the workers' rights.

Schedule of activities

March 2005

- 10: TUAC – Conference on the work of the G8 (London);
- 15-16: ETUC – Meeting of the Executive Committee (Brussels);
- 17: WCL – European Section (Brussels);
- 18-19: WCL – European Seminar (Brussels).



Trade Action

BRAZILIAN UNION LAUNCHES A RECYCLING INITIATIVE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE INFORMAL WORKERS

In recent years Bento Gonçalves (near Porto Alegre in Brazil) has been confronted with an inflow of refugees from neighbouring regions. They turn up in



the cities in search of a shinier future, but in many cases they end up in unemployment or in the informal economy, with all its consequences in the field of precariousness and social protection. Two years ago, the trade union SEC-BG, affiliated to FETRALCOS (a Latin American member organisation of the World Federation of Clerical Workers – WFCW) launched a garbage recycling project in an attempt to remedy this problem. The union has rented a large shed in which fifteen families sort municipal garbage that is brought two to three times a week. Bottles and old paper are sorted, then resold. SEC-BG has managed to start a production process that secures jobs to workers in the local informal economy. A splendid example of the way trade unions can provide, by means of adjusted working structures and an élan of solidarity, a concrete response to one of the most devastating effects of neo-liberal globalisation, which the unbridled rise in numbers of informal economy workers is. It is this kind of approach that will make it possible to arrive at a globalisation with a human and humane face, one of the main challenges to be taken up by the new world organisation. Incidentally, this was also

the theme of the Conference of the recent World Social Forum in Porto Alegre.

FIOST OPPOSES SECOND EU PORT DIRECTIVE

On 20 November 2003, the General Assembly of the European Parliament rejected under trade union pressure – including from FIOST and ACV/CSC-Transcom – a Directive on access to ports. This Directive was aimed to allow only workers having access to the port profession to load and unload ships. As an ILO Convention requires it, registered workers take precedence over...

FIOST and all its member organisations of dockers and seafarers oppose strongly the reopening of the debate in the European Commission. The second Port Directive is aimed to make it possible for ship's crews to handle freight in an autonomous manner, threatening so directly the employment, security and status of the registered dockers ... **So to help the European dockers secure their jobs, please sign the online petition at: www.pp2stop.org**

AFRICAN PUBLIC SECTOR POINTS OUT IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Prior to its Congress, in mid-February, the Pan-African Federation of Civil Servants (PFCS) organised a seminar on the social dialogue in this sector. Bert Van Caelenberg, Secretary General of INFEDOP, to which FPCS is affiliated, pointed out the importance of administrative collaboration worldwide to favour economic and social unity between the states and to achieve sustainable development. "*The public services sector must go actively in search of new ways to respond to current market tendencies such as privatisation and competition*", explains Van Caelenberg. "*This is the only means at our disposal to enable the continuity of our supply of services to the vast majority of the people.*" In the view of INFEDOP, local, national and global cooperation is indispensable, including on environment protection (Kyoto Protocol), human rights and women's rights. In this respect the tripartite social dialogue between governments, employers and workers is of prime importance, of course. Van Caelenberg also pointed out that INFEDOP wishes to enter upon cooperation agreements with other international federations so to continue to support, as a strong international trade union, all the members and representatives of the



public sector. After the seminar, the Congress of PFCS adopted policy, action and implementation plans. Mohamed Larbi Kabbaj was re-elected Secretary General.

SOCIAL UPHEAVAL AND STRIKES IN BOLIVIA

CLAT-Netherlands has informed us that the Santa Cruz region (in Bolivia) has been confronted with social upheaval in the past few weeks. Everything started when thousands of transport workers decided to paralyse traffic in the city of Santa Cruz, the economic nerve centre of Bolivia, in protest against the 10-to-23% rise in fuel prices. The protests then got stirred up to the point that the demonstrators demanded autonomy for the region. The region demands autonomy in the field of health care and education. Two hundred peasants, Indians and students went on hunger strike, and several roads were blocked. The demonstrators demanded the resignation of President Mesa and launched an appeal to form an autonomous local government.

NICARAGUAN TEACHERS ON STRIKE IN PROTEST AGAINST TOO LOW SALARIES



According to information from CLAT-Netherlands, more than 20,000 out of the 35,000 Nicaraguan teachers have gone on a national strike to obtain higher salaries. Most strikers are members of the Sandinista teachers' federations. In Nicaragua the salaries of civil servants at the bottom of the ladder are

insufficient to subsist, which forces many of them to take a second job. According to the federations, the government is unable to earmark money for education because of the agreements it concluded with the IMF.

TOGOLESE TRADE FEDERATIONS MOVE ON TO THE FUTURE

In the week from 22 to 30 January, no less than three congresses of CSTT member federations were organised. The first one was the Congress of the *Fédération nationale des employés et techniciens* (FENET), organised under the leadership of Secretary General Chrysanthe Koffi Zounnadjala. The event was preceded by a seminar on the effects of globalisation on the services sectors of FENET. Then, in the second half of the week, there was the Congress of the *Fédération des travailleurs du bois et construction* (FTBC), organised under the leadership of Secretary

General Azyao Gbandjou. This Congress, too, was preceded by a seminar, on basic and vocational training as a boost for employment and social security in the wood and building sectors. The seminar and the Congress were made possible with financial support from CFTC Batimat and WFBW, which had both sent a delegation to Togo.

The congresses of FENET and FTBC both passed concrete resolutions and recommendations for the near future on the following main issues: social dialogue between employers and workers for the country's development; application of the ILO conventions so to protect the workers; safety and health at work; support for small entrepreneurs in the informal economy; a legal status for informal sector workers with a view to their protection.

In conclusion of the week, on Saturday 29 January, there was the Congress of the Togolese miners and phosphate miners. Around 150 leaders assessed the trade union activities of the past four years and discussed the policy to be pursued in the next four years. This policy will be focused on large-scale training. Like all the federations in Togo, the miners' federation is exposed to a lack of resources due to the poverty and low salaries of its members. This fact limits its strength to take action. To this day, the Togolese government has taken very few initiatives to support the trade unions in their struggle for the emancipation of the workers and for the development of the country. The same goes for the employers. Companies like *Ciment de Togo*, which is an integral part of *Heidelberg Cement*, even refuse a dialogue with the trade unions. The trade



union leaders, whose role it is to underscore the problems facing the workers, fear for their jobs and do not dare take action. As a consequence, international aid is in many cases their only sparkle of hope for the future!