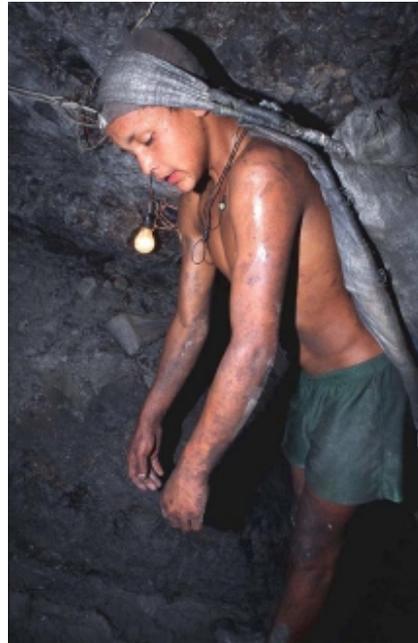


**CLOSE-UP ON MINES
ON 12 JUNE!**

For four years the 12th of June has been the World Day of Struggle against Child Labour. The International Labour Organisation – ILO – has announced that the attention on this year's Day will be focused on the situation of children working in mines and quarries. This work is indeed done in perilous, unhealthy and highly hazardous conditions that jeopardise their safety and health. According to ILO estimates over one million children worldwide are employed in small mine exploitations. Inquiries have gone to show that the working conditions of these children are among the worst conceivable. Their activities cause them to run serious risks. Many of them fall victim to incurable injuries, which in some cases are even fatal. All the continents are affected by the scourge of child labour: in Africa there are the diamond, gold and precious metals mines, in Asia the precious stones mines and the quarries, and in Latin America the gold, coal, emerald and tin mines. IPEC is the ILO's international programme for the elimination of child labour. It has carried out pilot projects in Mongolia, Tanzania, Niger and the Andean countries in Latin America. According to ILO it is possible to eliminate child labour done in hazardous circumstances by helping the miners and quarry workers to acquire legal rights, by organising cooperatives or other production units, by improving the safety, health and productivity of the adult workers and by supplying essential services like schools, clean water and sanitation. The World Confederation of Labour endorses the affirmations of IPEC and joins ILO in bringing the scourge of child labour to light.

For further details: www.ilo.org

**WTO CRITICISED IN TER NOOD
DECLARATION**

The 11th of March was the last day of the international training seminar for international trade union officials organised by ILO and IIWE at Ter Nood in Belgium. Some twenty participants from all over the world had a reflection on the challenges facing trade unions worldwide and on the strategies they should apply in their international policy. They also examined the functioning of several international institutions. In this context they paid a three-day visit to Geneva, where they could see behind the scenes of ILO, UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and WTO. The debates during the seminar were centred, further, on the international labour standards, international law and respect for the economic and social rights. The three-week seminar was concluded with a final declaration. In this declaration the participants point out that ILO is the only tripartite international body that occupies itself with the workers' and women workers' rights and that this body has been politically

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and legally weakened in recent times. Another point in the declaration is the acknowledgement that UNCTAD is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations that seeks to introduce the social dialogue, for instance. However, the declaration is very critical of WTO, which “*occupies itself exclusively with the protection of commercial interests and the application of neo-liberal globalisation*”. The seminar was also an opportunity for trade unions from different horizons to exchange experiences, which is always enriching.

For the complete text of the declaration:
www.cmt-wcl.org

MASS MOBILISATION FOR THE EURO-DEMONSTRATION!

The call of the European Trade Union Confederation – ETUC – was answered. On 19 March, more than 75,000 people demonstrated to send the Spring Summit of the European Union a clear message. Demonstrators from all over Europe made them-



selves heard to protect employment and the social rights and to say no to the Bolkestein Directive. In this project the principle of the country of origin would prevail, so that a company recognised in one of the member countries could supply services in all the EU member states while being controlled by the authorities of the country of origin. “*75,000 European trade unionists demand the governments to give Europe a more social orientation that meets more the everyday concerns of the European workers!*”. The World Confederation of Labour supports ETUC in this initiative. Many European affiliates of WCL took part in the demonstration to show that the European trade unions have voice and an important message!

For further details: www.etuc.org

PRESSURE ON THE RAILWAYMEN IN MACEDONIA

The privatisation of public companies and the transition of the economy in this country have affected most workers. The Macedonian public railway company is more than fifty years old. Its main activities are passenger and freight transport. It has been in transition for ten years and many workers are now facing a difficult situation. According to FIOST, the international transport federation affiliated to WCL, 750 workers, among

whom five trade union leaders, have been made anxious by their company, the *Makedonski Zeleznici Rail Company*. These railwaymen were put under pressure and some of them were bluntly dismissed after having stated their opinion about the privatisation of their company. A strike was organised and several trade unionist, among whom Marian Risteski, President of the railway company union, were imprisoned during this action. Fortunately, they were released. WCL remains concerned about the dismissal of the workers, which is an obvious violation of ILO Conventions 87 and 98. Willy Thys, Secretary General of WCL, urged the authorities of the country to widen the social dialogue between government, management and workers in order to find a solution for the problems related to the privatisation of Macedonian Rail and for the dismissals. WCL hopes that measures will be taken without delay to guarantee respect for the ILO standards, particularly for Conventions 87, 98 and 122, all three ratified by Macedonia.

TRADE UNIONS AGAINST ADOPTION OF A NEW LAW ON SGP

A number of European Union member states would agree to adopt a new clause in the legislation on the SGP, the generalised system of preferences. The trade union movement has always supported the application of a generalised system of preferences that has a strong potential to lead to better living and working conditions in the developing countries and to more respect for the basic rights of workers and women workers worldwide. The new clause would enable countries that have not ratified the eight basic ILO conventions to benefit anyway from the trade preferences granted by the SGP. The trade unions immediately opposed the adoption of such a clause. In a letter to Mr Mandelson, European Commissioner for Trade, WCL, ETUC and ICFTU expressed their very strong reluctance to this project. The ratification of the eight ILO conventions has indeed always been a *sine qua non* for obtaining the said benefits. The international trade unions cannot accept that one does not ratify these conventions on the pretext of supposed constitutional



difficulties. They are now mobilising to be sure that the ratification of the eight conventions remains the basic condition for granting trade preferences within the framework of the SGP.

FISHERMEN STILL IN DIFFICULTY IN ASIA

At the end of February, the ICL – Indian Confederation of Labour, one of our affiliates in India – organised its National Council in New Delhi with its President, Ashoke Bhattacharjee, in the chair. WCL Secretary General Willy Thys also took part in the debates, which were centred on development and on aid to the Tsunami victims, on the right to work as a basic right and on the creation of the new international trade union organisation. After the meeting, Willy Thys travelled to the organisation's headquarters, in Calcutta, where he met many Indian workers who told him about their concerns. Then Willy Thys, accompanied by a delegation of ICL, travelled to Andra Pradesh, an Indian region that was severely ravaged by the Tsunami. One of the most vulnerable sectors today in Andra Pradesh is no doubt fishery. Many fishermen, who are part of the informal economy, are now jobless and can hardly survive. It is essential that all-out efforts are made to find the best way to help them. We remind here that WCL with ISF – the International Solidarity Foundation – launched an international solidarity campaign just after the Tsunami. The funds raised are aimed to be redistributed in order to enable the local trade unionists to reorganise, to restore favourable working conditions and to boost the economy in the region..



CONGRESS OF BATU WILL ASSEMBLE IN JULY 2005

On 19-20 March BATU, our regional organisation for Asia, organised its Executive Committee meeting in the presence of Doekle Terpstra and Willy Thys, the respective Treasurer and Secretary General of WCL. It was decided during this important meeting that the next Congress of BATU would be convened in Bangkok, Thailand, on 10-16 July next. Another important topic was, of course, the creation of the new international trade union organisation, which would unite also independent and democratic trade unions affiliated neither to WCL nor to ICFTU. The Executive Committee of BATU decided to compose a committee for the discussions with APRO/ICFTU, the Asian regional organisation of ICFTU. The committee will consist of Necie Lucero, Secretary General of BATU, Rekson Silaban, President of SBSI (Indonesia), and Shouket Ali, Secretary General of APTUC (Pakistan).

“CLEAN LINGERIE” PROJECT LAUNCHED IN BELGIUM

The working conditions in the clothing industry are always very difficult, particularly for women, who constitute the majority of the workforce. Moreover, the multi-fibre agreement has been no longer applicable since the end of 2004. To put it plainly, the deregulation of the textile market has become a fact. So, China is entitled to export as many textile products as it wishes, which risks seriously harming the countries in the southern hemisphere. “It is not possible anymore to change course”, ACV-CSC explains in its review Tune, “the social responsibility of the clothing industry is essential”. The Belgian social partners, having anticipated this situation, have made ratify an international code of conduct engaging the social responsibility of the Belgian clothing sector in terms of production. The aim is to make “clean” clothes, manufactured in humane circumstances. The

code refers to the international conventions of the International Labour Organisation and to the Belgian law. Given the situation, the Belgian lingerie manufacturer Van de Velde has launched a project called “clean lingerie”. This company has its head office in Belgium, but subcontracts more and more assembly work in Tunisia, Hungary and China. After the distrust, it is now solidarity that has arisen between the Belgian workers and those in the other countries. Following the action of the ACV-CSC activists, the employer has given the project concrete shape by obtaining an internationally recognised label. A surplus value for the employer and for the workers! This fact give new courage to those who believe in international solidarity!

For further details on the project: www.acv-csc.be; Tune, *nouvelles syndicales* n°1/2005, the review of ACV-CSC.



TRADE UNION FREEDOM IN JEOPARDY IN NEPAL

On 22 March, WCL and ICFTU organised a day of international trade union action to express their solidarity with the national trade unions NTUC, Gefont and Cecont and to step up the pressure on the King of Nepal, so that he restores the trade union rights and places the country on the way to democracy. We remind here that the King prohibited each legitimate trade union activity in the context of a more general attack on the civil freedoms. It has been confirmed that several trade union leaders were arrested. On 22 March, many trade union delegations went in many countries to the Nepalese embassies to protest against these anti-democratic practices. Willy Thys and Guy Ryder, the respective general secretaries of WCL and ICFTU, went to the embassy in Brussels. At the same time, in Geneva, a

delegation of trade union leaders attending a session of the Governing Body of the International Labor Office (ILO) went to the Nepalese Mission with the United Nations to express its concern about the situation in that country and to demand the release of the imprisoned trade unionists. Like WCL and ICFTU, the members of the workers' group in the Governing Body of ILO demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all the imprisoned workers and the immediate restoration of their basic rights. "We are aware of the political difficulties Nepal is going through", said LeRoy Trotman, spokesman of the workers' group in the ILO and Vice President of the Governing Body, who led the delegation. He added that "the restoration of all the democratic and trade union rights is indispensable to place the country back on the way to democracy".

FRUITFUL MEETING WITH ADB

On 10 March, a delegation of WCL travelled to Tunis, where ADB – African Development Bank – has its provisional head office. Normally the Bank has its head office in Abidjan, in Ivory Coast, but it had to provisionally leave there because of the events that occurred in 2003. The African Development Bank is a branch of the World Bank, which comprises 77 member countries (in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe). It was established in 1964 and its mission, according to the definition, is to promote economic and social development by means of loans, investments and technical assistance. During its visit, WCL could meet the social development, sustainable development and poverty reduction departments, while getting acquainted with the

policies and operations related to social policies and the standards. The delegation also met the President of ADB, Omar Kabbaj. Both organisations found convergent views on the struggle against poverty and on the promotion of social development. Yet, ADB admitted to a lack of experience and expertise in the field of the core labour standards. The idea of a greater involvement of trade unions or trade union experts in this field was therefore tabled. In the coming days, ways of cooperation will be studied. In this period of non-respect for the trade union rights we would like to point out the will of the Bank to make overtures to the trade union movement. **For further details:** www.afdb.org



Schedule of activities

April 2005

- 03-06: WCL-ICFTU mission in Ukraine;
- 04-05: ACP-EU Follow-up Committee;
- 05: TUAC – working group on world trade and investment (Paris / France);
- 11-12: United Nations– 13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York);
- 16-17: World Bank / FMI – *Spring Meetings* (Washington);
- 19: Technical Consultations on PRSP (Washington);
- 20-22: World Bank – *Civil Society Global Policy Forum* (Washington);
- 20-22: WTO – Symposium: "WTO ten years later: global problems and multi-lateral solution" (Geneva / Switzerland);
- 23-25: UN – Forum of NGOs / Civil Society: for an information, knowledge and development society for all, inclusive of and centred on the peoples (Tunis);
- 23-29: World Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Organisations (WFBW) – international seminar (Ostend / Belgium).