

**ILO, MIGRATION AND CHILD LABOUR**

Last March, the International Labour Office – ILO – took part in two hearings of the European Parliament. The first one was about the social aspects of migration and its links with employment. During this hearing ILO explained that the international labour standards showed the way in the struggle against discrimination and in the aid to integrate migrants. Two joint ILO – European Union projects were mentioned. One project is aimed to organise the migration of labour in the Euro-Mediterranean – North



African cooperation zone, in East Africa and in West Africa, the other to fight discrimination against migrants in the European Union. So to achieve this goals, the project is based on cooperation between the social partners and on the highlighting of successful integration processes. The topic of the second hearing was child labour. The Parliament is preparing a new report on the policy and action programmes to be pursued by the EU. The activity and the involvement of ILO in this struggle are of paramount importance. ILO has taken stock of the current situation and pointed out that the struggle against this form of exploitation also implies simultaneous actions against poverty and in favour of education for all. The World Confederation of Labour entirely joins ILO in this analysis. WCL Secretary General Willy Thys recently stated: "One of the essential factors in poverty reduction is the promotion of education for all!". Besides, universal primary education is one of the eight millennium goals to be achieved by 2015. We will evaluate the progress with the achievement of these goals during the Summit next September.

**AN ENCOURAGEMENT  
IN THE STRUGGLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

The Beijing plan of action was adopted in 1995. The 187 signatory governments undertook to ensure, and to enforce respect for, equal opportunities for men and women. The Commission on the Status of Women – CSW – assembled from 28 February to 11 March last in New York to evaluate the plan and to take stock after ten years. The first conclusion of this meeting, attended by

over 6,000 participants at the United Nations headquarters, was that the consensus on the plan was reaffirmed. It is aimed, among other things, at strengthening the social, economic and political influence of women and at improving their health situation and training. Further aims are the prevention of acts of violence against women and respect for their sexual and marital rights. In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly already examined the progress made with the implementation of the Beijing plan of action. The participants in this year's edition stated that the governments should revitalise their commitments to achieve full equal opportunities for men and women. Thanks

to this second breath there can be new hopes of attaining the millennium goals. The third millennium goal – promote gender equality and empower women – is indeed not isolated from the others. The eight goals constitute a whole. Among the twelve fundamental problems pointed at in the plan of action figure violence against women, the image of women in the media and the violation of their basic rights. We stress again the importance of CSW, which can count on the support of progressive women's movements and takes full part in the empowerment of women.

**For more details:** <http://www.cmt-wcl.org>

**EDUCATION FOR POVERTY REDUCTION  
AND CONFLICT PREVENTION**

The statement of UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation – is irrefutable: more than half of the 104 million children left without schooling live in countries at war. Two striking examples: in Mozambique almost half of the primary schools were destroyed during the civil war, and in Rwanda two-thirds of the teachers fled or got killed. In its Education Today newsletter UNESCO explains that conflicts remain a major obstacle to education for all. Education is an essential factor of poverty reduction and therefore one of the first works to be put in hand again after a conflict. In Uganda, for sure a conflict-stricken country, an emergency education system was established. A salutary solution, for the war did not spare the children: in eighteen years' time, 25,000 of them were either enlisted or reduced to sexual slavery.

**TELE-FLASH**

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Uganda is not the only country to go through such tragic situations, of course. Last December in Cape Town, South Africa, the second Global Consultation on Education in Emergencies set standards and criteria for a minimum level of education in such circumstances. Setting these international standards is a world first that deserves to be stressed. The situation of numerous children worldwide indeed remains problematic. Education for all is a huge challenge. This kind of initiatives makes it possible to strive for its achievement.

For further details: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)



### SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNICATION, A CHALLENGE

Everybody knows that communication and information play a prominent role in the social organisations and movements. First, it is essential to distinguish between internal and external information. Second, it would be good to be able to use the new communication tools, not an easy thing in view of the speed at which the technology develops. Third, small organisations are lacking in many cases a staff member who occupies him- or herself exclusively with this task. The Latin American Information Agency – ALAI – has looked into this matter. After a first study, in the years 2000-2001, the Agency has now published a new inquiry, entitled “*Social Movements and Communication*”. The inquiry deals with, among other things, the use of information and communication technologies for the spreading, the networking and the internal dynamics of the social organisations, the strategies of the media in relation to the social organisations and the experiences with electronic communication. This tool will no doubt be useful for many members of these organisations who want to know more about communication. **You can find this publication in PDF format on the site of ALAI:** <http://alainet.org>

### WORKER'S STATUS DEVELOPED BY CFTC

Since the early 1990s, CFTC, – *Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens*, our French affiliate – has demanded the worker's status. This status, developed by CFTC, is aimed to secure the career of the workers, whether or not salaried, in guaranteeing them rights that are attributed and transferable for life, enabling them so to become actors of their own mobility and making it easier for them to combine their occupational, social and family lives. According to Gabrielle Simon, who is politically in charge of the project, it is a real project of society that covers all the aspects of a person's life: initial and lifelong training, parental leaves, creation of companies, transition between two situations. The matter of dismissal for economic reasons is also raised in the project. CFTC proposes in that case that the salaried workers concerned should maintain their contracts and salaries during twelve to eighteen months. In addition, they should benefit from aid for a personalised placement. Vocational training is also part and parcel of the worker's status. There were many sceptics when CFTC tabled the project. Today, the idea is gaining ground in France and there are good hopes. The year 2005 will no doubt be a key year in its realisation. WCL supports its French

affiliate in its work to give concrete shape to the project.

For further details: [www.cftc.fr](http://www.cftc.fr)

### ACCESS TO LAND TO REDUCE POVERTY

The International Coalition for Access to Land was created to deal with the difficulties and complexity of issues relating to access to land. Indeed, more and more organisations are working and combining forces to eliminate poverty. In order to pull out of poverty, it is essential to take an interest in the issues of access to land, to water and related productive resources. These elements are inevitable factors of sustainable development. The debates at the Coalition's General

Assembly, at the end of March, were centred on the millennium goals, of course. Indeed, since the Summit of 2000 the leaders of the whole world have recognised that poverty is the greatest challenge facing humanity. One of the keys to poverty reduction is no doubt the development of working conditions in rural areas. Today, over one billion people are living in extreme poverty. Eight hundred million of them are living in rural areas: small farmers, fishermen... According to Bruce Moore, who coordinates the International Coalition for Access to Land, the problem of access to land for the poorest sections of the population is linked, in many countries, to the inequalities these rural communities fall prey to. Once again, the weakest are victims of an unequal system.

For further details:

[www.landcoalition.org](http://www.landcoalition.org)



### DENUNCIATIONS

#### Street vendors attacked in Guatemala

The Human Rights Commission of CGTG – *Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala*, our affiliate in Guatemala – has told us about serious facts the workers have fallen victim to. On 19 March last, street vendors, some of them under age, all members of the street vendors' union, were verbally and physically attacked by the municipal police of Antigua, a city of Guatemala. The union is affiliated to FESTRI – the trade union federation of self-employed workers – and to CGTG. According to our Guatemalan affiliate, the police not only attacked the vendors but also their merchandise. The vendors were told to pay a fine to get their wares back. It is not the first time this kind of practices occurs in the region. Moreover, the vendors usually get merely 50 percent of their wares back. Two days after the facts the Secretary General of the union received death threats. Despite a short lull the situation of the Guatemalan workers is not improving. The workers' rights and the freedom of association have been in jeopardy for many years

already. The World Confederation of Labour fully joins with CGTC in its struggle and calls on the country's authorities to respect social justice.

**Burma: trade unions criticise European Commission**

The World Confederation of Labour, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions – ICFTU – and the European Trade Union Confederation – ETUC – have strongly criticised the European Commission over its planned “Burma Day 2005”. The international trade unions expressed their great concern about the content of the report in a letter to External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero Wladner. WCL, ICFTU and ETUC called for strong international sanctions against the Burmese military and for an end to foreign business dealings with this country. The international trade unions had already expressed their disappointment at the position of the European Union during the 292nd session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation – ILO –, which ended at the end of March. At that meeting the European Union had again postponed taking a decision on whether to support the trade unions calls to tighten up the measures against Burma ILO adopted in 2000. WCL, ICFTU and ETUC called on the European Commission to revise the programme for “Burma Day 2005” and to “ensure that biased events of this kind are not allowed to happen again”.

**Schedule of activities**

**April 2005**

- 11-12: United Nations – 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York);
- 16-17: World Bank / IMF – Spring Meetings (Washington);
- 19: Technical Consultations on PRSP (Washington);
- 20-22: World Bank – Civil Society Global Policy Forum (Washington);
- 20-22: WTO – Symposium: “WTO after ten years: global problems and multilateral solutions” (Geneva / Switzerland);
- 23-25: UN – NGO / Civil Society Forum: For an Inclusive, People-Centred, Development-Oriented and Knowledgeable Information Society for All (Tunis);
- 23-29: World Federation of Building and Woodworkers’ Unions (WFBW) – International seminar (Ostend / Belgium).

The world of



**Trade Action**

**REACH: FOR A BETTER PROTECTION OF THE EUROPEAN CHEMICAL WORKERS**

Merely 1 percent of the 100,000 chemicals circulating on the European market is really tested for safety for man and environment. Many chemical workers are exposed day after day to hazardous products, and around one out of three of the annually recognised occupational diseases in Europe would be attributable to exposure to hazardous chemical substances. That is why the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) approved the new EU Chemical Safety Proposal, which it views as a considerable improvement of the present chemicals legislation. This proposal, also known under the name of REACH – Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals – is intended to offer man and environment a better protection against the effects of chemicals while raising the effectiveness of the European chemical industry. Under the new proposal not the governments but indeed the chemical companies themselves have to prove that products are safe before they are marketed. Moreover, a large part of this information has to be made public. That way the population – including the chemical workers – will be better informed

about the possible risks of some products. Yet, says ETUC, there are still some important voids in the proposal. It should include, for instance, a standard procedure for manufacturers and importers to inform users and consumers about the safety of their products. Also, the admission procedure provided for in REACH should be in accordance with the legal substitution principle (according to which less noxious substances must substitute for hazardous products). In conclusion, ETUC takes the view that the application of REACH in small and medium-sized companies must be stimulated and facilitated by introducing cost-reducing procedures.

**THIRTY MILLION PROPERLY TRAINED TEACHERS SHORT!**

In order to ensure universal primary education by 2015 – one of the Millennium Development Goals – there are now, worldwide, no less than thirty million properly trained teachers short, says UNESCO. Teaching becomes an increasingly demanding profession and it pays rather poorly, but other factors are playing a role too, of course. In some African countries, for instance, the



number of pupils increased drastically because the government decided to provide free education. A good thing in itself, only there was no money to strengthen the body of teachers... In Sierra Leone, after eleven years of civil war, the government decided together with IMF to set a maximum limit to the number of teachers on the state's payroll. In places where there was no public infrastructure, the local population itself created small schools in cooperation with NGOs. The teachers in these schools are in many cases poorly trained, which has a direct impact on the level of education. Besides political decisions also the spreading of AIDS is exerting a strong influence on the number of teachers. In 2000 in Zambia, for instance, no less than 815 teachers in primary education died of AIDS, which is 45% of the number of teachers who finished their studies in that year! Another problem is the fact that teachers who had their training in the city are in many cases not willing to make a career in rural areas, where the greater part of the population lives. Incidentally, the shortage of teachers is not only a problem in developing countries, but also in OECD member states like the US, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Germany. A whole generation of teachers in these countries is about to retire without young people being ready to substitute for them. Teachers' unions therefore expose the deployment of underpaid and poorly trained teachers and stand up for adapted training projects and decent salaries to attract more young teachers. Their action is based on the recommendation of ILO and UNESCO with regard to the status, working circumstances and social and moral situation of teachers. Even if these recommendations date back from 1996, they are still as topical as ever! The World Confederation of Teachers (WCT), affiliated to WCL, cooperates with UNESCO and stands up for the right to quality education worldwide, provided by professionally trained teachers.

#### **ILO WATCHES OVER WORKING CIRCUMSTANCES IN CAMBODIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY**

In January 1999, the Cambodian government concluded with the US a three-year agreement on the textile and clothing industry. In December 2001, this agreement was renewed for another three-year term. The agreement provides for export quotas. It allows an annual 18% increase of Cambodian textile exports to the US. In exchange for this the working circumstances of the textile workers must be actively improved. Moreover, the improved Cambodian Labour Code stipulates that the international labour standards must be observed. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was entrusted with the technical support of this process. It is now developing an independent system to examine the working circumstances in the textile and clothing industry, assisting in bringing about new laws to improve the working circumstances in the sector, and raising the workers' awareness of their labour rights. ILO observers also pay regular visits to textile mills to assess the working circumstances. The Tenth Synthesis Report on the Working Conditions in Cambodia's Garment Sector compiles the findings of

the most recent inquiries in 26 mills. According to ILO, there was no proof either of forced labour or of child labour. The correct payment of wages and 'voluntary' overtime work remain a problem in several mills, but by and large a favourable development is perceptible. Obvious, yet fragile progress has also been made in the field of freedom of association.



Safety and health remain matters for concern in the Cambodian textile and garment mills. There is a lack of protective clothes, and the machinery is unsafe. Also ventilation and hygiene leave much to be desired in many mills. Safety training for the workers therefore remains one of the main areas for special attention. IFTC – the International Federation Textile and Clothing of WCL – keeps a close eye on the situation through C.CAWD, its local affiliate.

#### **ARGENTINEAN NEWSVENDORS STAND UP FOR DECENT STATUS**

On 9 March last, around one thousand Argentinean newsvendors took part in a demonstration called by the newsvendors' union Mu.Ven.Dia, affiliated to our Argentinean member organisation CCAS. They marched to the government building and to the Ministry of Employment to hand over a petition, in which they demand the abolition of three decrees dating from 1999, 2000 and 2001 respectively. Those decrees affected not only their status but also their income. Speaking concretely, their wages have dropped by at least 20 percent since 2001! They also had to pay cash and out of their own pockets the newspapers they wanted to vend, which diminished their income security considerably. Mu.Ven.Dia demonstrated not only for the basic workers' rights but also for the freedom of speech and for a pluralist system that gives the workers a say. There was a large attendance, and CCAS got express support from FELATRACS (Latin American Federation of Social Communication Workers), affiliated to CLAT. The organisation demanded in an official petition that the Argentinean government guarantee the income, job security and stability of the newsvendors.

