

MOROCCO, WORKERS OF IMINI MINES FREE!

In protest against the measures by which standards on part-time work with a 50-percent wage cut were introduced, the workers and executives of the Imini mines, in Morocco, had organised a strike and a sit-in in front of the



European Commission in this matter and to take stock of the current efforts in order to strengthen the social dimension in the trade policies. Some research work has also been done to identify the fields of technical cooperation between the Commission and ILO. This forum, open to a wide variety of people and organisations, will be attended by Juan Somavia, Director General of ILO, and Peter Mandelson, Foreign Trade Commissioner of the European Commission. We can add here that ILO, whose «Work» programme is aimed to help improve the employment conditions worldwide, has just published a study on sexual harassment at work. Besides defining the phenomenon, the report passes in review its consequences and the most efficient ways to prevent it. **For further details:** www.ilo.org

TELE-FLASH

is a monthly information bulletin containing brief trade union messages, edited by the information department of the WCL.

Responsible editor:
Willy Thys
Information officer:
Mathieu Debroux.

Reproduction authorised under acknowledgement of source

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

company's headquarters. The Imini mines are part of the «*Société anonyme chérifienne d'études minières*» (SACEM). In April 2004, the sit-in was broken and several members of CDT – one of our Moroccan affiliates – were attacked and some of them arrested. In a first judgment five workers were condemned to a ten-year prison sentence, whereas another had to pay a fine. It was essential at that moment to make every possible effort to ensure full respect for the freedom of association and for ILO conventions 87 and 98. An international campaign, in which the World Confederation of Labour fully participated, was organised to get the workers free. The general mobilisation bore fruit, for the Ouarzazate Court of Appeal passed a new judgment. The ten-year prison sentence was reduced to a suspended two-year one. This is another proof that solidarity is not an empty word!

A FORUM**TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL DIMENSION**

The development of globalisation and economic liberalisation is making more and more noise in the world. Particularly in the absence of a social dimension, this phenomenon has in many cases disastrous consequences for the workers and the populations. That is why ILO – the International Labour Office –, in cooperation with the European Commission, will organise on 26 May next in Turin a forum on social dimensions and on the impact of an open global trade system on the employment. The aim of the forum is to share the knowledge and experiences of ILO and the

EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION EXPLAINED

At the end of May, France will vote on whether or not it will be committed to the draft European Constitution. Many countries have already committed themselves. There is a lot of talk about this draft in the media, but most European citizens know hardly anything about the content of the Constitution. The 29 April issue of *Info CSC*, the magazine for social and societal information of ACV/CSC – our Belgian affiliate –, tries to help the citizen understand the ins and outs of the text. A few elements: according to *Info CSC*, efficiency, transparency and democracy are the key words. As regards governance, the office of President of the European Union would be created. He or she would be elected for a renewable 2.5-year term by the heads of State and government. The present system is a six-month alternation. This leaves little time to develop several topics, and it makes it difficult for the Union to maintain coherence in its policies. Also the office of Foreign Minister would be created. This minister would coordinate the national ministries and help them implement the Union's foreign policy. The draft Constitution provides, further, an extension of the lawgiving powers of the European Parliament, particularly in the field of the European budget and the home policy. As far as social progress is concerned, *Info CSC* explains that the draft, and this is a first, recognises that it is indissociable from economic progress. Finally, the Constitution would insert in its

second part the Charter of Fundamental Rights, strengthening so rights of importance to the workers. They will need it! **For further details:** www.csc-en-ligne.be

ILO PUBLISHES NEW REPORT ON FORCED LABOUR



On Wednesday 11 May, ILO – the International Labour Office – publishes its report on forced labour in the world, entitled «A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour». The report fits in with the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. It is the most detailed and most comprehensive analysis ILO has ever published on this topic. It contains an estimate of the phenomenon both at global and at regional levels, of the number of people affected

by forced labour, of the number of victims of trafficking as well as a first estimate of the gains made by the traffickers who exploit the victims of forced labour. One of the strong points of the ILO report is no doubt the analysis that highlights the fact that the abolition of forced labour is a an important stake for all the countries, the industrial, transition and developing ones alike. In conclusion, the report sums up the actions a number of countries have taken against forced labour in the past four years through ILO or its tripartite constituents – governments, employers and workers.

For further details and for copies of the report, please contact ILO's Communication department: communication@ilo.org.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION IN JEOPARDY IN PARAGUAY

The latest news from Paraguay is not good, particularly as far as the freedom of association is concerned. SITRACON – the federation of the workers of the National Telecommunications Commission – is a young union. The Organising Committee of this union was constituted on 17 November 2004. On 23 November, this information was sent to the President of the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL), Luis Reinoso Zayas. The Constitutive Assembly of the union was organised on 15 December; shortly afterwards the union was officially registered. Liz Fretes, the (female) Secretariat General de SITRACON, strangely began to undergo a whole series of pressures from the day CONATEL was informed of the creation of the union. The woman trade union leader was also simply transferred to another job. These acts are obvious violations of the trade union stability promoted by the Paraguayan Labour Code. By letter to the authorities of the country the World Confederation of Labour expressed its great concern about this situation, which runs counter to the principles of freedom of association and to the ILO conventions, which the country has ratified. Let us hope that measures will soon be taken to check this phenomenon.

MAURITANIA: DISPUTE AT SNIM SETTLED

Tensions ran high between the trade unions CLTM (*Confédération libre des travailleurs de Mauritanie*) and CGTM (*Confédération générale des travailleurs de*

Mauritanie) on the one hand and SNIM, (*Société nationale industrielle et minière de Mauritanie*), the national industrial and mining company of Mauritania, on the other. At the end of April, SNIM sapped the acquisitions of the workers in deciding not to index the extralegal wages on the new scale according to the agreement of 16 January 2005. Moreover, the bonuses were abolished, contrary to collective bargaining agreement. The trade union delegations and the workers strongly protested against these measures. Unfortunately, the reaction of SNIM were not a long time coming and 22 workers were dismissed, among them members of CLTM and CGTM. Under pressure of the trade unions things have considerably improved since. SNIM and the trade union confederations have signed an agreement under the arbitration of the labour inspector. The agreement provides that «SNIM immediately re-employs the workers who have put on breach of contract after the strike of April, the trade unions undertake to respect the current text, and the parties involved undertake to privilege the dialogue and consultations». A good example of a well-fought trade union battle.

VÍCTOR BAEZ REELECTED AT THE CONGRESS OF ORIT

ORIT – the Inter-American Regional Organisation (of ICFTU) – organised its 16th Congress on 18-21 April in Brasilia. A strong delegation of WCL and CLAT attended this great trade union meeting. The President of Brazil, Ignacio «Lula» Da Silva, a former trade unionist, attended the opening session. Víctor Baez was reelected Secretary General.

Schedule of activities

Mai 2005

- 27-28: WCL – Confederal Board (Geneva);
- 31: G8 Trade Union Leaders' Meeting with Tony Blair (London / UK).

June 2005

- 31/05 - 16/06: ILO – 93rd session of the International Labour Conference (Geneva);
- 01-02: G8 Conference on international trade unionism (Sussex);
- 01-03: TUC Conference on globalisation, emerging countries and the role of trade unions (Wilton Park / GB);
- 09: CNV – International Commission (Utrecht / the Netherlands);
- 09: International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – 89th session of the Council (Geneva);
- 09-11: IFTC – European seminar and World Board;
- 13-14: FIOST – European Board + European seminar (Vilnius);
- 18-26: WFIW – Congress and world seminar (Dakar).



Trade Action

IFTC STRUGGLES HARD FOR SUSTAINABLE AND DECENT WORK IN THE TEXTILE SECTOR

At its latest Congress, in September 2003 in the Netherlands, the International Federation Textile and



Clothing – IFTC – decided to focus its plan of action for 2003-2007 on the worldwide effects of the liberalisation of the textile sector on the situation of the workers. The abolition of the import restrictions, on 1 January 2005, will only step up the competition under the leadership of countries like China, which has huge opportunities to produce a lot, cheaply and well. Together with its affiliates in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, IFTC therefore follows closely the effects of liberalisation at the regional level, examining also what the local unions can do. In Honduras, for instance, IFTC cooperates closely with the «*Confederación General de Trabajadores de Honduras*» – CGTH to support the workers in the *maquilas* or free trade zones. The *maquilas* system is certainly no classic example of sustainable entrepreneurship. The companies pay no taxes whatsoever and are in most cases also exempted from import and export levies. On the other hand, the ordinary *maquilas* worker does pay taxes on his scanty wages, while getting almost no form of social protection. Though trade unions are 'officially' allowed, trade union work is very dangerous in these zones. Owing to the scarce cotton production, the ready-made companies are dependent on imports from the United States for their basic raw material. And since competing with China is a hopeless

task, IFTC sees in the development of balanced trade agreements with the US a possibility to develop the region. «*The region will have to change over to a more (vertically) integrated production with more surplus value, with smaller but specific orders of trendy products for which short, reliable delivery terms and quality are essential trump cards*», writes the April edition of the monthly *Dynamiek* (Dynamics) of ACV-CSC Textura. This will make it necessary to train cheap, unskilled workers into polyvalent, able workers who participate actively in the company... an opportunity to develop a social dialogue as well as better and more sustainable work. In its own country, Belgium, ACV-CSC Textura is playing a key role in the Clean Clothes Campaign (cf Teleflash 197). Current events show that there is still a long way to go. In Bangladesh collapsed recently the building of a garment mill that produced garments for large European companies like Zara and Carrefour. The official death toll was 74 workers, among whom a lot of women. Promising, however, is the fact that on 2 May China let know the European Commission that it would appoint a diplomat to negotiate on the export of Chinese textile...

WATER: THE SCARCE BLUE GOLD FOR AGRICULTURE

The United Nations (UN) officially proclaimed the period 2005-2015 the action decade for «*Water for Life*». The starting shot was given on 22 March with World Water Day. FELTRA – the Latin American federation of farmers, stock farmers and allied workers, affiliated to WFAFW – has expressed its concern about the fact that restricting the activities of world water companies is lacking on the UN agenda. Clean water is essential



for survival, for agriculture and therefore also for the sustainable development of the environment. But it is becoming an increasingly scarce good. That is why FELTRA believes that governments, social organisations and trade unions have to militate in favour of a more responsible management and use of this 'blue gold'. Six hundred million people live in arid areas on earth. Moreover, the increase in world population, the growing live-stock, excessive grazing, deforestation, erosion and the expansion of the agricultural fields to less appropriate areas results in many places of the world in soil exhaustion. One billion people in rural areas

have no drinking water at home. In many cases they have to cover long distances in search of water, time they could spend in a more productive manner with their families, tilling the land and developing the region that way. According to social organisations and farmers' unions like FELTRA, the right to clean drinking water and an equal distribution of that water must be the subject of a general UN treaty. In the long run, only respect for such a treaty can make the living and working circumstances in agriculture decent. It is the important task of trade unions and social organisations to make their members aware of the paramount importance of this natural source of wealth and development.

WCL ATTENDS ETUC SEMINAR ON PROTECTION OF INFORMAL DOMESTIC WORKERS



It's a mistake to think that the informal economy remains limited to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even if it's lower, the number of informal economy workers in Europe is steadily on the increase too. The domestic workers who are chiefly active in Western European countries comes from almost all the parts of the world. Guidance, protection and legislation are totally lacking, so that many of them have to work in inhuman circumstances.

The seminar «Out of the shadow: organising domestic workers: towards a protective regulatory framework for domestic work», which ETUC organised late in April in Brussels, was therefore largely attended by social organisations and trade unions. In Europe there is hardly any policy relating to informal economy workers. There are exceptions (eg Belgium), but they remain «white crows». During the ETUC seminar, a moving testimony of a Filipino woman worker went to show that trade unions are still facing quite a lot of challenges in the matter of supporting domestic workers, such as: support existing networks of migrants' organisations; exert pressure on the national and international authorities to arrive at a proper regulatory framework; enter upon a discussion on the affiliation and protection of domestic workers. Also the VERBA informal economy network of WCL wants to actively cooperate on taking up these challenges.

TRAINING TO IMPROVE THE INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE TRADE UNION IN INDIA

On 19-21 April, CFTUI-India organised a Capacity Building follow-up activity in Mumbai. Twenty local trade union leaders, among them six women, learned from trainers Neeraj Choubbey and Rohidas E. More how they can improve the internal working of their organisations. They got, among other things, a bargaining course and a leadership training, provided by CFTUI President Trivedi Ambareesh. Unions from the agricultural sector, wood and building, transport, education, public sector, fishery and industry were represented. CFTUI itself saw to it

that all the participants got the manuals in their own language (Hindi). The participants evaluated the training as very positive (9 out of 10 on average) and found the information useful in order better to function as local union leaders.

SAFETY AND HEALTH ON CAMBODIAN BUILDING SITES MUST IMPROVE

Like every year, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) organised on 28 April a World Day on Safety and Health at Work. This time the attention was focused on the prevention of industrial accidents and occupational diseases. Safety helmets, working boots, protective overalls... are systematically used on European, American and Australian sites. In developing countries like Cambodia, where the law does not force contractors to take safety measures, the situation is entirely different. In these countries workers climb scaffoldings without safety harness and use poorly maintained tools. First-aid kits are hardly available, and the safety and health inspections are rare. Officially most Cambodians are farmers, but after a bad season or a period of illness they migrate in many cases to the cities to work temporarily as unskilled labourers on building sites. It goes without saying that they hardly know the risks of the trade and are not informed of their rights in the matter of safety and health. Together with ILO, WFBW – the World Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions, affiliated to WCL – points out the great importance of sensitisation campaigns and training. Also the social dialogue between workers and employers must be stimulated so that they work



together on a productive but safe working environment. Safety at work can improve fast with the necessary attention and a number of (in many cases small) adjustments. It is much more difficult, however, to trace occupational diseases. Lung diseases, skin cancer and other affections often manifest themselves dozens of years after the worker was exposed to noxious substances. A further reason to inform the workers properly and to stimulate preventive measures! Now that Cambodia has overcome the aftermath of the civil war and its economy is stabilising, time has come to take ethical measures and to protect the country's human resources.

