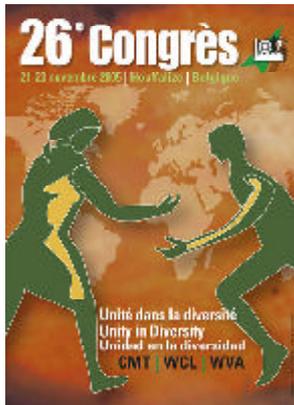


CONGRESS OF WCL IS NEARING!



On 21-23 November next, the World Confederation of Labour will assemble its 26th World Congress in Houffalize, in Belgium. This great international meeting will examine how the international trade union movement can adapt in order to remain a decisive stakeholder in an

economic and political context that tends to reduce its influence. Hence the main theme of this Congress: the creation of a new world trade union organisation uniting the member organisation of WCL and ICFTU as well as other democratic and independent organisations currently without international affiliation. As from now, you can download the following documents from our Internet site: the policy document, the activities document and the draft Congress resolutions. The Confederal Board and the Executive Committee of WCL will meet on Monday 21 November and on Wednesday 23 November. On 18-21 November an International Colloquium will be held on "Gender equality as a basic criterion of good governance for a lasting development" (Ter Nood, Belgium). The World Women's Committee on Sunday 20 November and the World Committee on Trade Action on Monday 21 November. All the sessions of the Congress will be public.

For further details: www.cmt-wcl.org

POVERTY CANNOT BE COMBATED WITHOUT TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

As the main link between the International Labour Office (ILO) and the women workers

and workers, the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) coordinates the activities of ILO with regard to the trade unions, both at the office and in the field. On 17-21 October last, ACTRAV organised an important international symposium on poverty. During the closing session Juan Somavia, Director General of ILO, and Willy Thys, Secretary General of WCL, addressed the symposium. As a sign of the times, the latter also spoke on behalf of ICFTU. According to the trade union leader, the presence of participants from North and from South at the symposium bore witness to the universality of the poverty phenomenon. He affirmed that poverty could not be combated without tackling social exclusion. Some of the solutions the international trade union movement proposed, he went on to say, were a stronger support for the policies and actions of ILO, the promotion of the conventions of ILO and the strengthening of its standard-setting and supervisory systems, and the promotion of the freedom of association and collective bargaining. He also added the need to reform and democratise the UNO in order to provide it with the means to weigh efficiently on the policies of the international financial institutions and WTO. In conclusion, Willy Thys urged to keep in mind one of the basic principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia, namely that poverty, where it existed, endangered the prosperity of all!

ABSENCE OF DECENT JOBS IS A FACTOR OF INCREASING VIOLENCE

Early in October, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) conducted in Geneva a seminar, which concluded that there is a link between the increase in violence and the disregard of economic, social and cultural rights. In the opinion of WCL, the increase in violence, in various shapes, is profoundly rooted in the absence of decent jobs and in the propagation of laws and practices that violate the workers' rights. These laws and practices generate frustration, poverty, exclusion and discontent and they lead, as we can see in several countries, to the penalisation of social action and the criminalisation of poverty. OMCT has been very active for many years in the matter of disregard of the workers' rights that lead to torture. On

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the occasion of this meeting, WCL has reiterated its support for the action of this organisation, insisting on the importance of strengthening OMCT in the matter of urgent denunciations and on a greater coordination of its campaigns with the trade union movement. **For further details:** www.omct.org

COMPANY RESTRUCTURING THAT TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION THE FUTURE OF THE WORKERS



As a result of globalisation and the “law of the market”, company restructuring is more and more heard about. In most cases the companies affirm that restructuring is a necessary evil to remain competitive and successful. This is not necessarily true.

According to a recent study of the International Labour Office – ILO – (*Restructuring for Corporate Success, A socially sensitive approach*, published under the direction of Nikolai Rogovsky, ILO, Geneva, 2005), this is not always true in practice. It goes without saying that drawing up and implementing a well-managed company restructuring plan is an extremely difficult exercise. ILO explains how several companies, worldwide, apply themselves to manage the restructuring in a socially compatible manner while achieving a global success. South African Breweries (SAB), one of the largest breweries of the world, is a most striking example of this. On the one hand, in partnership with the trade union FAWU, it actively sought jobs for the workers it had to dismiss. On the other, it successfully launched the NOAH project, which was aimed to create small companies for its former staff. One of the essential elements in the study of ILO is that restructuring can go well if it is based on an agreement between employers and workers and, in some cases, with the public authorities. Moreover, it would seem that, on the whole, the cuts in staff of recent years have not had the estimated effects, particularly as far as the cost is concerned. Another point is the effect of the restructuring on those who “stay” in the company. Increase in stress, absenteeism and sick leaves, diminution of the creativeness and the risk taking, and deterioration of the company image. Lastly, the study refers to the ILO conventions (158, 100, 111) and to the recommendations that can serve as references in the matter of restructuring. **For further details:** www.ilo.org

OVER ONE MILLION JOBS LOST IN PAKISTAN

The earthquake that hit Pakistan early in October has disastrous consequences not only in the humanitarian field but also in the world of work. According to the International Labour Office – ILO – over 1.1 million jobs were lost as a consequence of this dreadful earthquake. It finds it more than urgent to conceive programmes to create productive and

intensive jobs in order to reduce most of the poverty that was already present in the country and has now deteriorated as a result of the natural disaster. A first assessment shows that the earthquake destroyed most of the infrastructures and trades in the affected region: the border province in the north-west and the part of Kashmir under Pakistani administration. In addition, the live-stock was decimated, and the agricultural equipment seriously damaged. According to ILO, the disaster caused by the earthquake is made even worse by the fact that the affected region is one of the poorest of the country. Out of the 2.4 million workers living in the affected region over two million were already living below the poverty line, on less than two dollars a day! Before the earthquake, each worker provided for two people on average. To the ILO the calculation is simple: it means that the 1.1 million workers who lost their job provided, besides for themselves, for 2.4 million people 50 per cent of whom were probably younger than fifteen. It is a matter of urgency. ILO insists on adding to the restoration and reconstruction efforts that were deployed after the earthquake initiatives that will generate new jobs and new sources of income. **For further details:** www.ilo.org

POSITIVE OUTCOME IN THE DISPUTE AT SOCIGA IN GABON

A very tough conflict has opposed for several weeks the workers of the company SOCIGA in Gabon, a branch company of Imperial Tobacco, and their employers. DOAWTU, the African regional organisation of WCL, took part in a mission in aid of these workers. According to the people concerned, the dispute had a positive outcome. The new management indeed accepted to start negotiations on 15 September last. They took place under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and, according to our sources, took into account the interests both of the employers and of the workers. Eleven out of the 28 dismissed workers were reinstated, and the seventeen others, who had opted for a negotiated breach of their contracts, found all their rights respected. The months passed outside the company were compensated for by a bonus based on legal rights. We are pleased with the outcome of this dispute, for it shows that negotiations in most cases lead to results that are satisfactory to both parties concerned.

USO BECOMES MEMBER OF ETUC

On Thursday 20 October last, the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation – ETUC – approved unanimously of the affiliation of the Union Sindical Obrera – USO. The application had been submitted in 1993, no less than twelve years ago! ETUC was created in 1973 and unites more than sixty million workers and women workers who are organised in confederations from more than thirty European countries and in twelve European trade federations. *With this affiliation ETUC has strengthened the trajectory of USO, its genuineness and its representation. This holds out new prospects to continue to grow and to be more*

efficient in the protection of our members and of all the workers”, said Manuel Zaguirre, President of the Spanish trade union. We wish them good luck within ETUC. **For further details:** www.uso.es, www.etuc.org

CALL FOR ACTION AGAINST MYANMAR

Like every year, the case of Myanmar was a very though one during the International Labour Conference, last June. The conclusion of the Committee on the Application of the Standards were very clear. It found among other things that the extent of forced labour had not significantly changed and that the forced labour of the military and the forced recruitment of children in the army persist. In addition, the Committee deplored that the government of Myanmar had been unable to prove a real commitment to eliminate forced labour. Unfortunately, the list of grievances is still long. Adopting a wait-and-see attitude is out of place in this matter. The Committee rightly called on all the constituents of ILO (employers, governments and workers) to take urgent action in the matter of Myanmar. WCL and ICFTU clearly heard this call. Early in October, both international confederations reminded their member and friendly organisations that it was essential to take every possible action to help put an end to forced labour in Myanmar. When taking this action, the trade unions should also not forget that forced labour, as practised in that country, is a crime against humanity, as was established by the Fact-Finding Committee of ILO, which published its report on this issue in July 1988. The call must be taken into account for the total eradication of this scourge in that country. **For further details on the case of Myanmar:** www.ilo.org

TRADE UNIONISTS UNLAWFULLY DISMISSED IN SERBIA

The trade union rights would not have been respected at Belgrade airport. FIOST – the International Federation of Trade Unions of Transport Workers – was informed of the facts by one of its member organisations, the Autonomous Union of Airport Services Workers of Serbia, affiliated to CATUS, the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia. Several trade union leaders would have been dismissed after having protested against financial measures taken by the new company management, which ran counter to the interests of the employees. We were also informed of the fact the Federation’s office in Belgrade had been broken open and that the files had been seized. If these measures are not immediately withdrawn, FIOST will conduct an international protest campaign and inform the competent international institutions, including ILO, on this case of violation of the trade union rights. WCL fully endorses FIOST in this.

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL!

On 5 October was celebrated, about everywhere in the world, World Teachers’ Day. On that occasion, the World Confederation of Teachers –

WCT – launched a joint declaration with Education International. The message of this text is unambiguous: quality teachers for a quality education! In the opinion of both organisations, quality education is not possible unless the



teachers receive an initial quality training both in academic knowledge and in efficient pedagogic methods. In addition, we read in the declaration that the basis for the vocation of teachers is to develop the potential of children and young people, to raise the opportunities for all, without discrimination, and to help them become citizens capable of playing an essential role in their communities. Indeed, education is the foundation of development! **For the complete text of the declaration:** <http://www.wctcsme.org>

Schedule of activities

November 2005

- 03-18: ILO – Governing Body (Geneva);
- 03-04: TUAC – 115th plenary session (Paris);
- 07: TAC (Brussels);
- 08-09: ACP-EU Follow-Up Committee (Brussels);
- 15-18: CUT/Colombia – 5th Congress (Bogotá);
- 15-18: CFTC – 49th Congress (Bordeaux);
- 21-23: WCL – 26th Congress (Houffalize - Belgium);
- 29: FIDH – workshop on “Company and Human Rights (Paris);
- 30/11-01/12: UBUNTU – Coordination Commission and Organising Committee (Barcelona);
- 30/11-02/12: UNCTAD – meeting of experts on the ICTs and tourism from a perspective of development (Geneva).