
3. GENDER EQUALITY

Whereas:

- gender equality is an essential component of the strengthening of world trade unionism;
- the participation of women in the economy has massively increased in the past decades, bringing about profound changes in the organisation of labour and of society;
- the living and working conditions of women have deteriorated despite the promotion of the equality principle by all the summits organised by the international community;
- the rights of women are not respected and the value of their visible and invisible social contributions is not always enhanced;
- the degradation of the situation of women on the employment market is a consequence of the socially irresponsible aggressive policy models imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund;
- the implemented economic policies have brought about a drastic fall in the employment in the formal economy and an international labour division that results in more and more women working in the informal economy and in the free export zones: they benefit from no right whatsoever, they are very weakly unionised, they live in fear and precariousness;
- the feminisation of migration parallel to poverty is a process in which women are confronted with exploitation, violence and family disintegration, deprived of any social protection;
- the disregard of the freedom of association renders women more vulnerable to abuses and exploitation;
- the trade unions have difficulty in adapting to the current changes and are going through a crisis of representativeness. The trade union structures do not reflect the stronger presence of women on the labour market. At the collective bargaining tables the interests of the female working class are no priority whereas, historically, women have suffered most from discrimination at work. Despite the political commitments of most trade unions to equal opportunities, the participation of women in the decision-making structures and bodies of the trade unions remains insufficient at all levels, in the national, the regional as well as in the international organisations. The level of representation of women is particularly weak in the highest spheres of the trade union hierarchy, namely in the leading offices;
- a process of building a new world trade union confederation is going on, uniting WCL, ICFTU and other democratic trade union organisations;

the 26th Congress:

- urges the governments to re-examine the social effects of the reforms, to stop being the yes man of the international financial institutions and to pursue a sustainable and humane development model together with the trade unions and other representatives of the civil society as equal partners;
- affirms the importance of creating trade union advisory bodies to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation, ensuring in them equal female participation, in order to evaluate the past and future measures, decisions and policies;
- points out the importance of the role of female leaders in the strengthening of trade unionism in this new millennium and of the fact that they can bring about new positive changes in the ethics and practice of development;
- advocates that women workers join trade unions as trade unions can be powerful instruments of change towards equality;
- demands the equal representation of women workers in all the democratic institutions, from the family over the trade unions to the State;
- recommends that the trade union structures be adapted in their functioning, actions and mentalities to the interests and needs of the workers and women workers, potential members who have not yet found adequate responses to their needs;
- undertakes to favour the joint participation of men and women at all levels, including the decision-making places, with a view to strengthening the social legitimacy of women and to a better protection of the interests of all the members;
- is firmly convinced that the building of a new world trade union organisation is a unique opportunity to strengthen considerably the gender equality policies on the basis of concrete measures in several fields, particularly in the matter of joint participation of men and women at all levels, including the decision-making places;
- demands that the Constitutive Congress of the new organisation should pursue the goal of a joint participation of men and women and that at least 30 per cent of the places in the future decision bodies should be occupied by women;
- urges all the member organisations of WCL to work out a binding plan of action that will ensure the place and the promotion of women in all these organisations in order to ensure the strengthen representation of women on the eve of the Constitutive Congress of the new organisation;
- insists that in the new international organisation the elements that are part of the assets of the action of WCL women are preserved in order to ensure the just place of WCL women in the new organisation: the taking into account, on equal terms, of the different cultural, social and economic realities of women in the various continents, a participatory approach to the national and regional levels, priority to guiding the action in favour of women who find themselves in the most precarious working circumstances, the installation in each national organisation of focal points in charge of the follow-up, monitoring, reporting and, if necessary, adjustment of the policy programme and the plan of action on the promotion of equal opportunities;
- adopts, upon request of WWC, a "Plan for Equality at WCL", which must result in better living and working conditions and in the closure of the gap of female representation in the political, social and economic decision-making bodies, in the trade union structures

of each national member organisation and in the structures of WCL by the implementation of the following eleven proposals:

- integrated gender equality policy: in order to improve the socio-occupational situation of the women workers, the member organisations of WCL must take integrated measures (principle of gender mainstreaming) to eradicate the existing discrimination between men and women in the world of work;
- analysis and plan of action: in order better to adapt the practical functioning of the trade union bodies to the needs of men and women, the trade unions undertake to define the bottlenecks and priorities and to draw up a plan of action on gender equality;
- database: in order to implement a gender policy, the member organisations shall organise at all levels a standardised, regular and transparent follow-up on the gender issue on the basis of comparable data;
- strengthening of the role of the body in charge of the gender equality policy: the member organisations and WCL shall mandate a specific body to follow up and supervise the gender equality policy;
- integrate the gender dimension into collective bargaining: in the light of the implementation of the gender equality principle, the trade unions shall integrate at all levels the gender dimension into each item on the agenda of collective bargaining sessions. Moreover, a stronger representation of women in the collective bargaining teams shall be a priority;
- make gender equality the centre of the architecture of social well-being (social protection, decent income, health care);
- training in gender: Considering that sensitisation to the gender issue is an essential factor in the trade union policy, the trade unions shall integrate it as a compulsory matter in their general training and specific trade union training programmes.
- ratification and application of the international and national legal instruments: the trade unions shall exert pressure on the competent authorities so that they ratify and put much more effort into making apply the national and international legal instruments in the matter of equal treatment and equal opportunities (conventions 100, 103, 111, 183 and 156) and of core standards;
- promotion of the Beijing action platform at all levels (national, regional and international) and of the participation of women in the activities of international agencies such as UNO, ILO, WTO, World Bank and others;
- promotion of the important participation of women in various global networks of social movements (Global March of Women, World Social Forum, etc) as legitimate spaces for coordinating struggles, for analysis and for developing action strategies;
- go more to the precarious sectors: the organisation and promotion of workers' rights in sectors where women are overrepresented, working in precarious circumstances, and where trade unions are hardly or not present, is a priority of this Congress (free export zones, informal economy, situation of migration and atypical jobs).