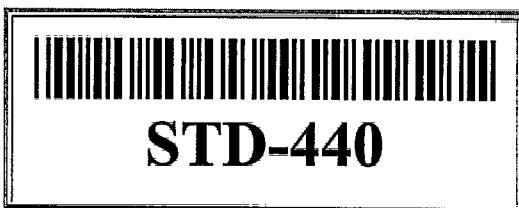


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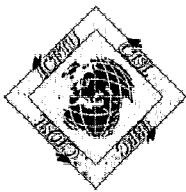
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A selection OnLine interviews and articles published in july/august 2002 | No 1

Interview

World Summit for Sustainable development: Johannesburg 2002

The forthcoming UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) took place in Johannesburg between 26 August and 4 September. What were the key issues for the unions in the debates? Lucien Royer, Director of health and safety and environment programmes for the ICFTU and TUAC and the unions' representative in the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), presented them to us just before the summit. Extracts.

- What will be the key questions for trade unions on the issue of integrating sustainable development?

We will be asking countries and international agencies to make a concrete commitment to the participation of all major groups, institutions and intergovernmental bodies in implementation of WSSD outcomes. Governments must admit that they cannot handle the job alone; they must rely on the resources, and commitment that trade unions and other groups can bring – to action at the worksite, the community, and all the way to the international level.

We will also ask countries to address the employment and social impacts of WSSD outcomes in a concrete manner, with 'just transition' programmes that go far beyond wages, adjustment costs and training for the workers that are directly affected.

We have already made some progress at the OECD. In this regard, by reaching an agreement with the employers' group to support research into the employment implications of climate change measures. Going into the WSSD, we are asking that the new World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation be given a mandate to oversee progress that governments make in implementing social goals for sustainable development. More specifically, these efforts must be incorporated in a well-thought, structured plan to promote workplace-based partnerships for protecting the environment. Such a plan must be based on true dialogue between governments and worker and employer organisations, a task very well suited with the ILO's history and experience.

- The unions will also concentrate on strategies for promotion of sustainable



development to workers and at the workplace. Have there been any positive developments in terms of raising awareness amongst workers?

There should be no doubt about workers capacity in this regard. Moreover the public awareness about the environment has grown in the last ten years. Our members are increasingly concerned about the state of the world's ecosystem, and when faced with the challenge in realistic terms, they want to do something about it.

The biggest barrier to mobilizing this awareness, however, lies in the employment relations that exist in the typical workplace. We need bold leadership from the world's employers; good will and enthusiasm are not enough. They must agree to involve employees in meaningful workplace action, and take serious account of their views and proposals. Sustainable development poses challenges to our members, but widespread change will not occur unless employers adopt to a new relationship with their employees.

Another huge barrier has been a lack of commitment on the part of so many governments. It is only now, in the final preparations for the WSSD, that we see significant movement towards a commitment to action. Previously, the process was mired in a international political gridlock, as governments appeared to be more intent on enhancing their own images rather than tackling the problems of sustainable development.

- Changes to sustainable development suppose that all actors get involved in the process. What in practice does this mean and what are the tools of engagement in change?

Participation has always been a prime goal, not only of trade unions, but of all

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Agenda 21 Major Groups involved in preparations for the WSSD. The CSD broke new ground in this respect, when it initiated its Multistakeholder Dialogue Process, which allowed representatives of all nine Major Groups to engage in direct dialogue with country delegates, not as a side event, but as a formal part of their meetings.

Change must occur at the level of civil society. At best, governments and intergovernmental agencies can provide encouragement and support. Business and industry know what they have to do; so do trade unions. That is why both groups were supportive of the concept of 'voluntary Agreements' (now called 'Type II' initiatives (to distinguish them from Type I, which is the text negotiated by government delegates). This, more than anything, shows how deeply embedded the concept of 'stakeholder participation' has penetrated the WSSD process.

● The 28 April theme this year affirms that Health & Safety is a barometer of public health. Will this principle be defended in Johannesburg, and does it relate to the fight against HIV/AIDS?

The theme we have chosen for this year's observance of April 28, the International Day of Mourning for Workers is "Improving Public Health Through Improved Workplace Health & Safety." The point of this slogan is clearly illustrated in the fight against HIV/AIDS especially in such places as South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Besides being a monumental tragedy in its own right, it provides the clearest possible

illustration of the type of action that is necessary to link workplace and public health issues.

Since Rio, we have stepped up our efforts to draw attention to the hundreds of thousands of workers who die, are injured, or become ill due to the unsafe, unhealthy workplace. These worker deaths and injuries are one of the clearest indications that worker and trade union rights are being violated. Then there are the hundreds of trade unionists who are murdered, injured, beaten, tortured, or harassed every year, because they choose to exercise their rights under Freedom of Association – not to mention the more subtle methods used by employers and governments to undermine trade union rights with repressive legislation, union-busters, export processing zones, and human resource strategies designed to keep unions off the workplace.

We are asking the WSSD declare this type of victimization and suppression totally unacceptable, and to make it clear that patterns of production that yield such human misery and loss of life can never be considered sustainable. Governments must be called to account for allowing, or even initiating such violations, especially where these same countries have declared their support for the principles of democracy and human rights in other international settings.

● does this imply for the ban asbestos campaign?

Everyone should know that trade unions were at the forefront of the fight to ban the use of asbestos, a battle we

fought alone for many years, against governments and industry. It wasn't enough, that over 100,000 workers died world-wide each year as a result of exposure to asbestos, especially in developing countries - where asbestos is still being aggressively marketed. Trade unions were therefore happy to follow-up on a 2000 ruling by the World Trade Organisation, which paved the way for countries to support the world-wide ban launched by the ICFTU. We are currently doing our best to bring together the ILO and the World Health Organisation, to provide the necessary support for ILO instruments regarding asbestos. Finally, we expect governments and employers to provide asbestos workers with a "Just Transition" to new, safer and decent employment.

At the final Prepcos in Indonesia, Governments agreed to wide-sweeping text, linking the life cycles of mines, minerals and metals to occupational health and safety and to instruments for sustainable development. This means that our campaign for banning asbestos uses, or for that matter other chemicals of concern to work, can now proceed as part of a sustainable development WSSD project, one that can seek formal and informal partnerships for its implementation, under WSSD Type agreements.

We still need to fashion our asbestos – or other chemicals campaign- within this framework but now we have new space within which engage on chemical issues, of importance to us. 1

..... ICFTU OnLine... 145/260802/JL-TN

Georgia: profit at all costs

Irish and Spanish multinationals flout international standards in Georgia.

With output in the Georgian energy sector in rapid decline due to government corruption and incompetence, wage arrears of 10 – 15 months have accumulated and the situation for many workers is desperate. In reaction, between 26th to 29th June 2002 the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its affiliate, the Georgian Trade Union Amalgamation (GTUA) ran a campaign culminating in mass demonstrations in front of the National Commission for Energy Regulation and the headquarters of the administration of the "Georgian Energy Market".

Backed by calls for liberalisation from the International Financial Institutions, the Georgian government has auctioned off swathes of the energy sector to foreign multinational enterprises with scant regard to effects on workers.

In January 2002, the Spanish company "Iberdrola" was granted the right to ma-

nage the energy sector in Georgia for five years, and since then wage arrears have grown from 28 to over 30 million Lari (1\$ = 2,2 Lari). Despite turning over a profit of 906 Million Euros in 2001, Iberdrola is leaving workers on the verge of starvation in Georgia. Profit has once again come before people.

In another case, in clear breach of the collective agreements in the two companies, the tender to manage the branch of the energy sector that controls "Electrotransfer" and "Electrodispatching" was won by the Irish company, ESB International. The collective agreements in these companies recognized the right of the trade union to be involved in decisions regarding restructuring and mass dismissals.

Yet, the company administrations did not inform the trade union of its negotiations with ESB International and the relevant government institutions and the result of these negotiations was that

ESB won the tender. More importantly, an agreement was reached between the administration of "Electrotransfer" and "Electrodispatching" on a restructuring programme, i.e on merging of these companies and mass dismissals. The trade union was informed of this restructuring programme simultaneously with the news regarding the transfer of management, basically post factum.

As such, ESB International is in clear breach of the OECD guidelines which apply to all multinationals which have their headquarters based in OECD countries.

In addition, the National Commission for Energy Regulation has forbidden its own workers to set up a union, claiming that a Georgian law on "Electro energy and natural gas" forbids the formation of trade unions within its structures.

"Of all CIS countries, Georgia has the sad honour to be in the first place regarding wage arrears. Most of the concer-

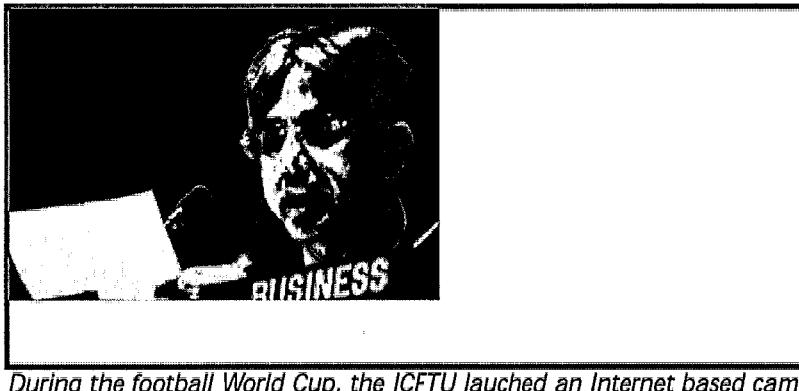
ned workers make no more than the minimum wage, which does not even secure the most minimal level of subsistence. The situation has been exacerbated by the policies of MNEs whereby profit comes at the expense of all other factors," explained Vadim Borisov, ICFTU representative for CIS countries.

Government policies have caused an unprecedented decline in the energy sector in recent years. "In the last years the overall energy production has col-

lapsed," said Irakli Tugushi, president of the CTUA. "At the beginning of the 1990s, Georgia produced 14.2 million KW/hour per year, whereas today we do not manage to produce more than 7 million KW/hour. This situation is outright catastrophic, both for the energy sector and for the future of Georgia and its economic development. No restructuring can be accomplished without energy sources, nor can investments be attracted."

"It is of cardinal importance that the move towards economic disintegration is stopped in Georgia, and that CTUA is involved in future reforms, which can only be successful if the current state of corruption and state robbery is ended," explained ICFTU representative Sandra Vermuyten, following the demonstrations in Georgia. ¶

.....ICFTU OnLine...128/280602/SV-JL



During the football World Cup, the ICFTU launched an Internet based campaign to free incarcerated trade union leaders in South Korea.

Bahrain: The struggle for free trade unionism

The ICFTU takes action against the u-turn by the Bahraini authorities who, after seemingly having moved to establish the first free trade union in the country, suddenly had a change of heart.

During the General Assembly of the General Committee of Bahrain Workers at the end of June, an historic and democratic vote was taken to establish the first free trade union in the Gulf, the General Federation of Bahrain Workers (GFBW).

Only days later, the Ministry of Labour demanded that the vote be rescinded.

Yet Abdulghaffar Abdulhussain, President of the would-be union, has expressed his willingness to keep pressing for government recognition of the union. The ICFTU is demonstrating its full solidarity with workers in Bahrain by calling on its 225 affiliate members to contact the GFBW with offers of support. The ICFTU is also calling on the government of Bahrain to recognise the GFBW and to set up labour legislation in line with ILO standards.

The General Committee of Bahrain Workers has hitherto been under government control and as such, unable to recruit members or charge membership fees. Its rules of procedure have to be approved by the Labour Ministry and the government requires that a Mi-

nistry representative attend and supervise the GCBW's general assemblies. The move made by the General Committee to vote to become an independent trade union was bold in a region characterised by harsh repression of trade union activities; the current penalty for leading strike action is up to 10 years imprisonment. While the repression has been easing slightly over recent years with the ILO working with the Bahrain government to establish a new labour code, real change in the country has been chronically slow.

"The creation of a free trade union and a new labour code respecting ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining would be a giant leap towards the protection of workers in a region where rights are few and far between. After this brave move, it is down to the international trade union movement and the ILO to bring the pressure of their solidarity to bear on the Bahraini government," said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder. ¶

Korean trade unionists freed

Following an intense trade union campaign, two of the 51 trade unionists currently behind bars in South Korea have been released

The importance of international trade union solidarity was once again underlined with the news that on 3 July, following a sustained Global Unions campaign, two South Korean trade unionists were granted early release from prison.

Il-seup Kim, President of the Daewoo autoworkers union and his vice president, Sunggap Kim, were freed having served only 6 months of a 5 year prison term. The news came only days after a Global Unions-backed action day took place on June 27, picketing Korean embassies worldwide to demand the release of the numerous trade unionists currently languishing behind bars.

"Two free, only forty-nine to go," said ICFTU Trade Union Rights representative Janek Kuczakiewicz, who led the 27 June trade union delegation to meet Hong Suk In, First Secretary of the Korean Embassy in Brussels. "This is an important step, but the fact that 75 trade unionists are still wanted by the Korean authorities starkly illustrates the need for us to keep up the pressure," he added. ¶

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The workplace central to the battle against AIDS

At the XIV International Conference on AIDS in Barcelona, 7-12 July 2002, world trade union bodies called on national governments to institute more integrated approaches to deal with the scourge of HIV/AIDS by implementing concrete measures at the workplace level, where both problems and solutions converge.

Trade unions have stepped up efforts to encourage governments and stakeholders to make the new ILO Code of Practice for HIV/AIDS a central tool for implementation of solutions, world-wide, because it engages workplace actors to work together with governments and others in dealing with AIDS/HIV as a workplace issue and to use the workplace as a forum for education and change.

The ILO hosted a special side event in Barcelona, linking the world of work with HIV/AIDS and highlighting the role of its Code of Practice in strengthening the capacity of social partners to implement solutions at the workplace level that are linked to national targets. Trade unions from different continents will argue that more support is needed for efforts to draw employers and workers in a common effort to address the issue.

As part of a world-wide trade union strategy to integrate AIDS/HIV and the ILO Code of Practice within a broader range of government policies and programmes, trade unions recently succeeded in obtaining agreement from governments to integrate these within the World Summit on Sustainable Development,

which took place in South Africa in August. They also agreed to link occupational health and safety issues to public health measures and to promote workplace-based partnerships in the next decade over concrete implementation measures for sustainable development, including use of the ILO Code of Conduct for AIDS/HIV. In effect, this new document brings workplace actors into collaboration with governments and other relevant institutions in order to deal with HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue, and to harness the capacity that the workplace provides in terms of education and as a forum for change. Significantly, governments have agreed to develop these approaches in tandem with programs to address poverty and environmental issues.

A new ILO report stating that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is growing in 'unbelievable proportions' in certain regions of the world, and with recent information from UNAIDS showing that a disproportionate percentage of women and youth are increasingly affected, trade unionists argue there is sufficient convincing proof that workplaces must become a major focus in the decade to come.

Aside from the obvious threat posed to the lives of workers by the epidemic, effects of HIV/AIDS in the workplace range from a loss of valuable skills and experience to discrimination at work threatening fundamental principles and rights, and undermines efforts for prevention and care. By the same token, say trade unionists, workplaces are where solutions can have real long-lasting value, especially for stemming the tide through prevention.

HIV/AIDS is an issue which is already being seriously addressed by the ICFTU and its Global union partners at a workplace level. In just one example, ICFTU affiliate, COSATU, is spearheading the South African campaign against HIV/AIDS.

Also in South Africa, the Miners Union, the NUM, has been fighting for years to defend the health rights of its members. Recently, the union succeeded in reaching a comprehensive agreement covering prevention programmes, (voluntary) testing, medical care and treatment of infected people with 'Gold Fields,' the second-largest producer of gold in the country. ¶

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Widespread international condemnation of violations in Congo

Massive mobilisation in support of 9 trade unionists from the Kwilu-Ngongo sugar company imprisoned for pursuing their trade union activities.

An international outcry against violations of trade union rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo has followed a call from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) for solidarity for 9 trade unionists currently appealing a ten month prison sentence for legitimate trade union activities in the country.

Thousands of trade unionists and labour activists worldwide have bombarded Congolese President Joseph Kabila with letters and e-mail messages demanding the release of the unionists representing workers at the Compagnie sucrière de Kwilu Ngongo, who were jailed in June this year, charged with having written strike leaflets. The appeal has been taken up by dozens of national

trade union centres on all 4 continents, and over two thousand individual trade union activists.

"We welcome this important show of international solidarity," said Richard Kadanga, international representative of the ICFTU-affiliated Congolese trade union centre, Confédération Démocratique de Travail (CDT). "We must keep up the pressure on the Congolese authorities to ensure the release of the trade unionists, and the respect workers basic human rights in future. The only crime of these nine people has been to pursue legitimate trade union activities covered by ILO conventions 87 and 98, both of which the Democratic Republic of Congo has ratified."

The date for the hearing at the appeal

court was set for Friday 2 August- but has been since postponed on several occasions. According to the ICFTU, it is vital to keep up the pressure in order to let President Kabila know that such anti-union behaviour is unacceptable, especially in a country striving for peace and reconciliation after years of draining conflict. His actions and the actions of other abusers of trade union rights worldwide will not go unnoticed. "This is intolerable situation for Congolese trade unions and we hope that President Kabila and the authorities under his control will now resolve the situation, and prevent any further abuses of this kind," said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder. ¶

.....ICFTU OnLine...141/010802/IL-DP

Spanish Multinational abuses Peruvian workers' rights,

With 9000 sacked workers and collective agreements breached, the account of the Spanish-based telecoms multinational Telefonica in Peru reads like a globalisation horror story.

Since Telefonica won the right to manage the Peruvian telephone network as part of the then President Albert Fujimori's policy of privatisation, over three-quarters of the total workforce has been cut. When Telefonica dismissed a further 570 workers in June this year, in clear breach of an April 2001 collective agreement, the remaining 3000 staff (the majority of whom are members of the 'Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores de Telefonica del Peru' and FETRATEL) staged a walk-out.

Amongst other things, the company tried, under the 'tercerización' plan, to force a number of workers to accept to work for other, sub-contracting companies, losing rights which they had built

up over many years. This was in addition to arbitrary dismissals, forced early retirement and arbitrary rotation and substitution of workers.

In spite of warnings from the Peruvian Deputy Minister for Labour, José Echeandía, that the company has acted illegally, Telefonica remains intransigent and the strike continues.

Furthermore, on 7 August, the police illegally entered the premises of two trade unions, allegedly removing computers and a television. Three workers were injured in this incident. On 9 August, three workers were arrested. They were released the day after.

The ICFTU is supporting a complaint recently submitted to the International

Labour Organisation (ILO) against Telefonica by its Peruvian affiliate, CUT, and is also calling on the government of Peru, led by Alejandro Toledo, to act immediately.

Meanwhile, UNI, the Global Union Federation for the telecoms sector, has brought the case to the attention of Telefonica de Espana, the parent company of Telefonica del Peru. Latest indications are that under UNI pressure, Telefonica de Espana has consented to the opening of a formal 'dispute procedure' as envisaged under their mutual framework agreement. ¶

.....ICFTU online...145/160802/MO-TUR

Thailand: ICFTU pushing for reinstatement of all protesting Light House workers

In June 2002, 75 workers were fired from the Light House Company for protesting the removal of their trade union delegates. The management is refusing to reinstate these workers even despite signing an agreement to do so. The ICFTU has mobilized in their support.

Around 850 workers had initially been sacked following a walk out on June 11 in protest at the dismissal of all 20 elected union representatives at the plant. The workers had been driven to desperate measures by events which began as early as October 2001 when 600 workers were fired (out of a total workforce of 1400). The majority of these were women with more than 10 years of experience with the company. Overtime benefits were cut and wages slashed by 25% to \$3.60 per day for the remaining workforce, despite a dramatic increase in their workload. Dramatic protests ensued in Bangkok, culminating in 200 protesting workers from the Light House Labour Union in Thailand presenting a letter written in their own blood to the Thai parliament.

A letter sent to the ICFTU by Thai National Human Rights Commissioner, Professor Pradit Chareonthaitawee, set out the terms of the agreement with the company including the reinstatement of over 400 workers including the union representatives. The company has clearly not honoured this agreement. In fact, the ICFTU has ascertained that the manager of the factory has

in fact refused to take back 75 of the workers who walked out in protest at the sackings of their union representatives in June. These workers are still protesting in front of the factory. Furthermore, the 20 reinstated trade unionists have been given jobs which deny them access to the rest of the staff in the factory, which effectively prevents them from carrying out their legitimate trade union activities.

Dramatic protests ensued in Bangkok, culminating in 200 protesting workers from the Light House Labour Union in Thailand presenting a letter written in their own blood to the Thai parliament.

In a letter addressed to Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, informing him of the situation at the Light House plant, ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder urges him to ensu-

re the prompt reinstatement of all dismissed workers. The ICFTU has pledged to keep up the pressure until it is satisfied that the 75 workers are allowed to return to work and the trade unionists are able to continue their activities unhindered. ¶

.....ICFTU online...136/080802/IL-DP

Publications

New ICFTU report reveals widespread discrimination and occurrences of child labour in Europe (July 2002)

Fashioning a New Deal, the complete ICFTU/TUAC programme for the WSSD, South Africa, (August 2002).

"No More Business as Usual" – Unions Step Up Campaign Against Corporate Rip-Offs

trade unions have launched a major intensification of their campaign for corporate accountability and transparency, as fraudulent dealings are exposed at even more large US companies.

At an Executive Council meeting of the ICFTU-affiliated AFL-CIO in Chicago on 6 August, ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder offered his organisation's full support to AFL-CIO actions to put an end to corporate corruption and false accounting. Ryder pointed to the lack of strong and cohesive global rules on company behaviour as a major factor in the stagnant world economy. "Big companies have been taking advantage of lax regulation for too long all over the world" he said, adding that "the AFL-CIO campaign is mirrored by union actions across the globe. As even more companies guilty of corporate greed hit the wall, the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people are under threat, and the position of responsible companies is undermined".

The United States trade unions have launched a major intensification of their campaign for corporate accountability and transparency, as fraudulent dealings are exposed at even more large US companies. Following successful legal action by the AFL-CIO to win compensation for thousands of workers who fell victim to the Enron scandal, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has announced a raft of union actions around the country get ef-

fective regulation and to hold companies and their directors accountable for their actions.

"When corporate criminals invade our workplaces and our markets to steal our jobs and our savings, we must react every bit as decisively as when thieves enter our homes and try to bring harm to our loved ones", Sweeney said.

The scandals at Enron, WorldCom and Arthur Andersen alone have cost over 28,000 workers their jobs, with thousands of additional jobs lost or at risk and huge numbers of US workers deprived of their hard-earned retirement incomes and essential benefits such as health care.

The AFL-CIO is targeting individual corporations one by one to work for reform, while pressing for strong legislation to stop future corporate rip-offs. Sweeney has said that the more than US\$ 5 trillion in US union pension funds will be used to put pressure on companies to behave responsibly, and the unions will run high-profile campaigns such as the successful action to stop Connecticut-based Stanley Works moving its headquarters to Bermuda to avoid existing US legal and taxation obligations.

"Governments now have no choice but to heed our calls for an end to fast and loose corporate behaviour, if the confidence of working people and responsible investors is to be restored," said Ryder, adding that "the global economic and finance institutions need to do more than just talk about the problem. Along with effective global regulation, the IMF and the World Bank must stop insisting that developing countries privatize necessary public services, many of which have been sold off at rock bottom prices, sometimes to the very same global corporations which have collapsed due to the criminal behaviour of a few company bosses. These are often the very same companies which exploit and victimize their employees, denying basic rights which are set out in international law but are not properly enforced".

The ICFTU and its Global Unions partners have been pressing for comprehensive action for corporate transparency and effective regulation at a range of global and regional agencies, as part of their campaign action to transform globalisation to the benefit of people rather than profit. ¶

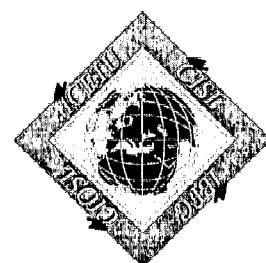
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List of other news OnLines from july/august 2002.

(Unabridged version are available on request by mail or telephone from:

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- Nigeria: Unions mobilise to save Amina Lawal Kurami (ICFTU OnLine Bulletins, 30/8/2002)
- Thailand at the cutting edge of globalisation (ICFTU OnLine Bulletins, 29/8/2002)
- World Summit for Sustainable Development: Johannesburg 2002: Grounding Sustainability in Reality (ICFTU OnLine Bulletins, 28/8/2002)
- Making sustainability work: decent jobs at the heart of sustainable development (ICFTU OnLine Bulletins, 24/8/2002)
- ICFTU Supports Continuation of ILO Director General Somavia's Mandate (ICFTU OnLine Bulletins, 20/8/2002)
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- Towards the end of Independent trade unionism in Belarus? (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 19/7/2002)
- Venezuela: Union & HQ attacked (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 16/7/2002)
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