



## Feminise Unions Now!

**Women attending the 8th ICFTU Women's Conference threw down a challenge to unions throughout the world – reform your structures so that they are more inclusive of women and young people and reflect the increasing number of women joining union ranks. The alternative is a slow death. Other issues such as war in Iraq, the need to build alliances with non-governmental organisations and women's organisations, and strategies to attract more women into the union movement were tackled by more than 500 women from all corners of the globe over four days in Melbourne, Australia.**

The conference opened on Tuesday 18 February with a keynote speech by New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, and was also addressed by ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder and by ACTU President Sharan Burrow. The ACTU hosted the conference.

Elsa Ramos, Director of Equality and Youth at the ICFTU said the conference looked at unions through women's eyes. 'And what do we see? A lot of good things but also things that need to change,' she said. 'The good news is that women are coming to the unions in significant numbers despite the male dominance of our structures, so we are doing something right. And in some countries such as Australia and the Nordic countries we have gender parity in our structures.'

Elsa Ramos said the conference highlighted the need for more urgent action by unions to achieve the cultural change necessary to make our movement inclusive for women and young people.

'This conference focused on strategies. We have already spent many years doing the research and developing a plan of action.'

'In more concrete terms, at the next ICFTU World Congress in Japan next year, we will be wanting gender equity on our delegations as laid down in the ICFTU constitution.'

### NO TO WAR

The conference was held in the shadow of impending war and the conference was resolute in calling for no war and the imperative of finding peaceful



solutions to the conflict, in the frame of the United Nations. It was emphasized in a resolution passed at the conference that the consequences of war for women and children is always catastrophic.

### ORGANISING WOMEN

The conference recognized the negative influence that globalisation has had on women. It also built on the Global Unions' Organising campaign launched last year with its vision of unions as the vehicle for working women to achieve equality and justice. For unions there is an enormous incentive - women are a major source of growth and strength for trade unions.

A key target identified by the conference as a priority for organisation (recruitment) and growth are atypical workers and workers in the informal economy. Success in these areas will require innovative strategies and alliances with

cooperatives and membership-based organizations. A high priority is to reach out to young women who make up the bulk of the workforce in the exporting zones.

### THE INESTIMABLE VALUE OF SHARING EXPERIENCES

Wrapping up the conference, Helen Creed, Chair of the ICFTU Women's Committee said the conference set out important policy guidelines for the ICFTU in light of its next World Congress in 2004.

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'We have developed concrete strategies and promoted the exchange of information and experiences between women trade unionists.'

'We have done this through the formal proceedings of the conference, through the social activities and through one-on-one networking throughout the four days.'

'We have aimed to strengthen solidarity both inside and outside the trade union movement. I know that I will leave this conference with a greater sense of the true meanings of sisterhood and solidarity.' ●

ICFTU OnLine... 040/190203

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**8th World Women's Conference ICFTU**  
**8ème Conférence Mondiale des Femmes CISL**  
**8ª Conferencia Mundial de Mujeres CIOSL**  
**8. Weltfrauenkonferenz IBFG**  
 Melbourne, Australia, 18-21/02/2003

### World's women tell Australia: Paid maternity leave is overdue!

Women delegates from the ICFTU World Women's Conference demonstrated in Melbourne, on the 21 February in favour of a government-legislated paid maternity leave scheme for all Australian working women. A crowd holding up banners showing 120 countries where workers already enjoy universal paid maternity leave protection heard speakers from around the world argue that Australia is lagging behind the international community in its treatment of women workers.

Kaye Carberry, Assistant General Secretary of the UK's Trades Union Congress, Daysi Montero D'Oleo from the Dominican Republic and Chair of the Women's Committee of ICFTU's ORIT (regional organization for the Americas) and Tandiwe Munyani, Chair of the ICFTU's Youth Committee, told the crowd about the situation on maternity

protection rights, in their respective countries.

Australia is the only developed nation apart from the USA without a universal paid maternity leave system. Two-thirds of Australian working women have no paid maternity leave rights.

In the United States, two-thirds of the nearly 50 million working women are mothers of young children, but not one woman in the United States is entitled to paid maternity leave under federal law said AFL-CIO Vice President (USA), Linda Chavez-Thompson. We will continue to struggle until every sister in every country in the world has got the right to work, the right to decent work, the right to maternity protection and the right to paid maternity leave, concluded Helen Creed, Chair of the ICFTU Women's Committee and Chair of the world women's conference entitled "Unions for Women, Women for Unions".

ICFTU OnLine... 033/200203



# RESPECT: Global trade union mobilisation announced for May 1st

**Global Unions is calling on trade unions around the world to mobilise on May 1st of this year, under the common theme of "Respect". "A call for Respect makes perfect sense at a time when workers' rights and necessary public services such as health and education are being eroded by the globalisation process," stated Guy Ryder.**

**"W**e're using May 1st, our own international workers' day, to launch a trade union call for employers and governments to show respect for those in and out of work."

Unions around the world are being encouraged to integrate their own May 1st plans within the overall theme of "respect", using common materials and slogans suggested by Global Unions, a grouping of the ICFTU and eleven allied trade union internationals.

"Young people are a top priority", stressed Ryder, "they make up over 20% of the world's workforce, many are in increasingly precarious work, and yet they are the future of our movement. The union message, that workers get respect through trade unions, must

reach beyond our traditional audiences. This is why we're particularly asking unions to reach out to young people this year."

The concept of Respect will be developed in the run up to May 1st within five globalisation-related sub-themes. In addition to "respect for workers' rights", "respect through quality public services", and "respect for young workers",

the Global Unions mobilisation also calls for "respect for all by ending poverty" and "respect for workers' health and safety". It is expected that these sub-themes will form the basis of a movement-wide public information campaign in the run up to the next WTO Ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico in September this year. ●

ICFTU OnLine ... 022/130203



## Russia: ICFTU supports hunger-striking workers at metals giant

**Flouting of a collective agreement, an increasing campaign of discreditation inside the company towards the trade union and continuous threats targeting union delegates, 57 of whom have just embarked on a hunger strike. Such is the situation at Russian metals giant, "Norilsk Nickel". In a letter to President Vladimir Putin, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) "deemed these tactics to be unacceptable".**

**T**he ICFTU called upon the Russian President to apply pressure on the company "to re-establish the conditions of normal dialogue inside the OAO Metal Mining Plant 'Norilsk Nickel'".

On December 24, 2002, the trade union representatives of the company decided to start a collective labour dispute procedure. Through this procedure, the trade union representing workers inside Norilsk Nickel intends to confront the refusal of management to fulfill its obligations as defined in the collective agreement as well as to protest against management's systematic harassment, which is "clearly intended to undermine the capacity of the trade unions to represent their members", according to the letter.

"In the face of a difficult socio-economic situation with price increases on essential food products, housing tariffs and communal services", said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder, "the trade unions should be able to expect an open and frank dialogue in working toward a solution".

Instead of this, management at the nickel, cobalt and platinum metals production company seems to have opted for direct confrontation with trade unions. A campaign has been orchestrated inside the company, as well as in the local media, to discredit the unions.

"Threats have been made against union leaders and activists; employees have been openly called upon to leave their trade unions; and isolationist measures have been adopted to segregate

the union representatives from the main local production teams", according to the ICFTU.

The ICFTU informed Putin that "the Council of the Trade Unions of OAO Metal Mining Plant 'Norilsk Nickel' decided on February 6 to embark on a hunger strike involving fifty-seven people. This clearly reveals the urgency of action for simple humanitarian reasons."

The ICFTU, also emphasize that pressures against the trade union leaders and activists, campaign of harassment not only violate the main ILO conventions, ratified by the Government of Russia, but could also affect the long-term survival of this company." ●

ICFTU OnLine ... 026/170203

# ICFTU protests arrest warrant on Venezuelan leader Ortega

**The ICFTU has strongly protested the issuing of a warrant for the arrest of Carlos Ortega, President of the ICFTU-affiliated Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV) on charges of crimes of rebellion, treason against the motherland, incitement, association with criminals and destruction of property.**

**E**arlier this week, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said "the Revolutionary Government is on the offensive", and urged the country's judges to not "be afraid to issue arrest warrants against coup-plotters".

"This marks a dramatic escalation of the conflict by the Chavez government. It's clear that Chavez is intent on the suppression of all democratic expression and independent trade unionism," commented ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder.

ORIT, the ICFTU's regional organisation for the Americas, based in Caracas, has sent a protest to President Chavez, protesting the issue of the arrest warrant

for Carlos Ortega, and accusing Chavez of advancing a "strategy of criminalisation". The letter goes on to condemn the move as an "act of political persecution".

"The charges leveled against Ortega are clearly politically motivated, and are a violation of fundamental constitutional rights," said Ryder. "Acts like these severely undermine efforts to bring a domestic and peaceful resolution to the crisis in Venezuela."

One month prior to this development, at the World Social Forum in Brazil, national trade union centres in the region, under the auspices of the ICFTU, formed the "Trade Union Friends of Venezuela" group, to shadow the intergovernmental initiative aimed at finding a

negotiated, democratic, peaceful and electoral solution to the crisis in Venezuela.

The move against Ortega was made on the same day that Carlos Fernandez, head of the employers' organisation, FEDECAMARAS, was detained by government agents, and only 2 days after four members of the opposition were abducted, tortured and assassinated in what has been described as a politically motivated killing. Both Ortega and Fernandez have been lead figures in the Venezuelan opposition movement, and have played a central role in the recent general strike, which continued for two months. ●

ICFTU OnLine...042/2102003

# Iraq crisis must be resolved through UN

**The only legitimate and acceptable way to resolve the Iraq crisis is through the United Nations, according to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The global union body, again warning against a "slide into war" in Iraq.**

**T**he ICFTU believes that the inspection processes put in place by the UN Security Council should be continued and strengthened, not pre-empted.

As trade unionists worldwide raise their voices for peace, the UN-mandated inspectors have, in their report to the Security Council on 14 February, judged

that their work to implement Resolution 1441 should continue. In these circumstances, taking military action would be completely unjustifiable and would seriously undermine the role and authority of the UN and future prospects for settling international disputes peacefully.

The message of the tens of millions of people who have joined demonstrations

around the world for a peaceful resolution of the crisis must be heeded. Governments must show strength, resolution and courage by sticking with the UN processes to bring the Iraqi dictatorship into full compliance with Resolution 1441 and to bring about respect for international law in Iraq. ●

ICFTU OnLine ... 032/190203

# ICFTU Appeals to UN over Ivory Coast conflict

**In an appeal to United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, the ICFTU has welcomed the initiative of the French government, with the UN and the African Union, to host round table talks between the Ivory Coast government and opposition forces on 15 January.**

**A**s the death and injury toll inside the Ivory Coast continues to rise, and thousands of people are forced to flee their homes, the global trade union body is also pointing to the grave threat to the security of neighbouring countries posed by the ongoing conflict, which is also causing massive economic disruption throughout the region. Ivory Coast is a major world producer of agricultural commodities, and workers from several

nearby countries depend on employment in Ivory Coast for their livelihoods.

ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder said that "for the Paris talks to succeed, all the member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) need to be involved in the process. For that reason, we are calling on the UN Secretary General to exert maximum influence on the ECOWAS members to be represented in Paris at

the highest level."

The ICFTU's Ivory Coast affiliate, the UGTCl, held on January 8 a national meeting of union representatives in the capital Abidjan, to bring further pressure on all sides to stop the fighting and fully commit themselves to the process of dialogue to resolve the conflict. ●

ICFTU online... 002/080103



# Global Unions in Porto Alegre and Davos: "Democratising Globalisation"

**In a joint statement "Democratising Globalisation: A World with Peace, Jobs, Rights and Social Justice" the main international trade union organisations strongly criticised "today's globalisation". They called for democratic global governance and an end to the culture of corporate irresponsibility which is at the heart of the collapse of multi-billion-dollar companies and decline in stock markets worldwide, linked in turn to the deepening global economic crisis.**

**T**his statement was released for the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, attended by hundreds of trade unionists from around the world, and for the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, where high-ranking international union officials brought the trade union message to business leaders.

On the eve of both events, ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder stated: "billions of people are being left behind by globalisation, while only a small minority are reaping the benefits of unfettered liberalisation and deregulation. The institutions which have real power over global economic policy must be subject to democratic governance, if the potential benefits of increased global trade and investment are to be realised for all the world's people. The international trade union movement will be making its voice heard both in Porto Alegre and in Davos, calling for major changes in the direction of globalisation".

Following the devastating effects of corporate collapses such as ENRON and Worldcom on working people and their families, the trade union statement highlights "systematic failures of financial and corporate governance and the widespread existence of incentives for malpractice" and calls for measures to make businesses fully accountable.

## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR LEADERS MEET PRESIDENT LULA

Applause from labour leaders gree-



International labour leaders meet President Lula. (Photo: UNI)

ted the new President of Brazil - Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva - at a briefing meeting with union leaders at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos.

**G**lobalisation will only work, the unions believe, if people north and south of the equator feel part of the process and share in any benefits.

In Brazil, the fact that the Workers Party President was going to the WEF had been a subject for some debate. An audience of 60-70 thousand at the WSF applauded Lula when he explained the purpose of his mission to Davos. President Lula explained that power was within reach of the people of Brazil - even the most humble. "What we have done is like what happened in South Africa where the people, after years of struggle, were able to elect a black president." He stressed his government's fight against hunger and for jobs,

which would involve the whole of society.

Guy Ryder congratulated the president on his election and said: "we are happy you have come to Davos, like us, to give the message of Porto Alegre - that a decent world is possible. We believe that the challenges for all of us correspond to the challenges facing the people of Brazil today."

## UNIONS BACK NEW AGENDA FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

On 27 January Global Unions pledged their support for a "new agenda of shared global development" outlined on the eve of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, by Brazil's President Lula.

Globalisation will only work, the unions believe, if people north and south of the equator feel part of the process and share in any benefits. 20 million people worldwide have lost their jobs in the last two years and the total number of working poor around



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the globe has risen to 550 million. "A new agenda has got to include eradicating poverty and hunger and give greater priority to stimulating sustainable, economic growth to create new jobs," said Guy Ryder.

"Respect has to be a big part of the new agenda - respect for citizens of developing as well as developed countries, respect for the global rights of

workers and respect for the ambitions of all families to provide a decent life for their children."

Unions challenged big business to accept the new agenda, change their behaviour and work with unions and communities. A start could be made by building closer links with the World Social Forum launched in Porto Alegre and due to be held next year in India. "As well as President Lula's war on hunger we need a war on despair," said the

unions.

The unions warned of a "slide to war" in Iraq and repeated their call for the crisis to be handled through the United Nations. "The poor will suffer most from war - whether in Iraq or in a developing world least able to absorb the economic dislocation of a major conflict," pointed out Mr. Ryder. ●

ICFTU OnLine... 005/220103, 007/270103,  
008/270103

## Burma: Trade unions protest at waiver of EU visa ban on Burmese dictatorship

**The ICFTU and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) have protested to the European Union over the attendance of representatives of the Burmese military dictatorship at a Ministerial meeting between the European Union and ASEAN countries in Brussels on 27 and 28 January.**

**O**n 16 October 2002, the EU Council of Ministers renewed its longstanding visa ban on members of Burmese regime, amongst other sanctions. The ICFTU maintains that by granting a visa to SPDC Deputy Foreign Minister Khin Maung Win, the EU is being inconsistent with its own policy decisions.

Khin Maung's visit takes place against the background of continued repression in Burma, generalized forced labour and attacks on trade unionists and other democracy activists by the military junta. International concern is also growing about the lack of any genuine progress in the so-called "secret dialogue" process between the generals and the democratic opposition. Despite the release from house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in May 2002, heavy restrictions remain on the National League for Democracy, including monitoring of their communications and movements, and threats against NLD activists.

"The Burmese dictatorship continues to run the country as virtual forced labour camp, with the military compelling adults and children to work for the army and on infrastructure projects", said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder, adding that "the European Union should uphold its formal commitment not to allow representatives of this vicious regime to enter Europe, let alone take part in these talks. The EU decision risks conferring some degree of respectability on one of the world's most re-



pressive regimes and sending a signal to the junta that their duplicitous actions, talking about dialogue but in fact increasing repression, can lead to international credibility".

The ICFTU last October submitted a comprehensive file of evidence to the UN's International Labour Organisation detailing the continued use of forced labour in Burma, including torture, rape and murder of civilians. Under pressure from the ICFTU, Global Union Federations and Burma democracy groups, se-

veral multinational companies have decided to withdraw from the country, however the international trade union movement's monitoring of foreign investment shows that over 300 multinationals continue to have business links with the military regime.

The ICFTU joined a number of Brussels-based organisations at a demonstration against Khin Maung's visit on Tuesday January. ●

ICFTU online... 010/270103



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# China: ICFTU deeply concerned at subversion charges against worker rights activists

**On 13 January 2003, The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has alerted its world-wide network to the imminent trial of independent workers' rights activists Yao Fuxin and Xiao Yunliang in Liaoyang (Liaoning Province, China), urging its member organisations on all continents to send strong protests to the Chinese authorities over the case. In a letter addressed to Chinese President Jiang Zemin, ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder expressed the international trade union movement's deep concern over charges of subversion brought against the activists.**

**T**he charges against Yao and Xiao result from their involvement in a four-year campaign against corruption, mismanagement and resultant bankruptcy at the Liaoyang Ferro-Alloy Factory. Their arrest in March 2002 led the ICFTU to lodge a formal complaint against China with the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO). The ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association is expected to deliver its ruling in the case next March.

However, with the trial set for 15 January, the ICFTU has urged President Jiang Zemin to drop all charges against the worker representatives and to release those still in detention immediately. The global trade union body has also asked the ILO to intervene directly with the Chinese authorities.

In a strongly worded letter to Mr Wang Zhaoguo the recently-appointed Chairman of China's official trade union centre, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), Guy Ryder denounced repeated public attacks by the ACFTU's top leadership on the Liaoyang detainees. He also stressed that accusations of violence, including regarding the alleged burning and bombing of

cars by the indicted workers, had been flatly denied by local authorities as well as by the ACFTU regional leader for Liaoyang (capital of China's Liaoning Province). Last fall, Mr. Su, Chairman of the Liaoyang Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU) remarked that these accusations were "sheer rumour. There is no way that Yao Fuxin was involved in such activities... There was no violence or extreme behaviour of any sort."

Since the detention of Yao Fuxin, Xiao Yunliang, and their fellow workers Pang Qingxiang and Wang Zhaoming, the rights of the four activists have been repeatedly violated. According to reports received by the ICFTU, Yao's family were not informed of his detention until four days after his arrest. He and Xiao have also been denied proper medical attention, and have had no access to lawyers. Numerous unfounded allegations had been made against the workers throughout their detention, although no formal charges were brought within the legal time limits.

The Chinese government claims that the four took advantage of worker discontent to "plan, instigate and carry out a number of destructive activities". According to the results of the official in-

quiries, however, there were no accusations that the protestors engaged in any violent activity. Workers and family members have likewise categorically denied any damage to public property or other violent activity by the four.

The protests last March were the culmination of a four-year effort by workers to protect their rights. During March 2002, thousands of angry workers from over 20 factories took to the streets of Liaoyang, demanding a basic living allowance, pension and back pay, as well as protesting against the corruption of local officials who forced the Liaoyang Ferro-Alloy Factory into bankruptcy. Although government officials are pursuing claims of corruption against the former factory manager, the workers are still persecuted for taking their well-founded grievances to the streets.

According to the ICFTU annual survey 2002 of violations of trade unions rights (<http://www.icftu.org/survey>), independent union activists in China are systematically subjected to arrest, detention and trial in violation of international law. At least forty independent trade unionists and workers' rights activists are currently detained throughout the country. Many of them have been in prison since the notorious Tiananmen Square repression of 1989. Several long-term detainees have been singled out for ill-treatment and torture in forced labour camps, and have become dangerously ill as a result. ●

ICFTU online... 003/130103

## **Other news from January/February 2003. (Available on request by mail or telephone from: ICFTU, Ivo De Créé, tél ++322 224 02 10)**

- Global Unions Accuse Governments Over Exclusion of Public Voices in Policy Debate at UN Summit (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 25/2/2003)
- New wave of repression against strikers in Peru - ICFTU protests (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 17/2/2003)
- ICFTU denounces harassment and detention of trade unionists in Cameroon (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 13/2/2003)
- World Bank highlights positive development impact of trade unions (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 12/2/2003)
- Colombia: ICFTU challenges President on the rise in anti-union violence (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 7/2/2003)
- El Salvador: Violations of Labour Standards Rife, says new ICFTU Report (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 5/2/2003)
- Croatia: ICFTU condemns threats to liberalise labour law (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 4/2/2003)
- Spotlight interviewed: Davor Juric, president of the UATUC (Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia) (Interviews, 4/2/2003)
- ICFTU says the Maldives is paradise for tourists, not workers (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 15/1/2003)
- ICFTU Appeals to UN over Ivory Coast conflict (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 8/1/2003)
- World trade union body condemns Tel Aviv bombing (ICFTU Online Bulletins, 6/1/2003)

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