



A special edition focusing on the Global Unions May 1st mobilisation 2003 | No 3

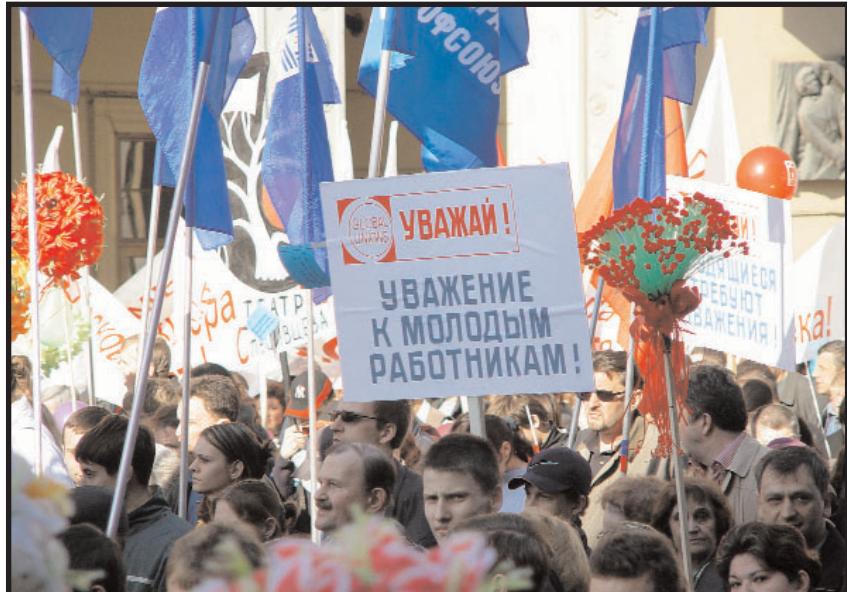
## The Global Unions Call to Action

**O**n this year's May Day as part of the Global Unions campaign on globalisation, affiliates of the ICFTU and its Global Unions partners from around the world celebrated the international workers' day through marches, rallies, education and street theatre. The Global Unions' slogan "Respect" featured strongly in trade union activities. Workers marched under banners calling for respect for workers, international solidarity and peace in Iraq.

Many demonstrations took up the five respect themes chosen by the ICFTU and global union federations:

- respect for workers' rights the world over
- respect through quality public services
- respect for young workers
- respect for all by ending poverty
- respect for health and safety

In most countries trade unions wove the theme into national concerns, including HIV/AIDS, privatisation, public sector pay, rising unemployment and attacks on workers' rights.



Unions were asked to send information on how they marked May Day in their countries. This bulletin gives a flavour of the action taken on May 1st by millions of workers around the world in defence of their

rights. ●

More information and materials about the Global Unions May 1st mobilisation can be found at: <http://www.global-unions.org/may1>

### What is Global Unions?

Increasingly, the name "Global Unions" is being used for the major organisation of the international trade union movement. Global Unions comprises:

- the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which represents most national trade union centres. Most individual unions relate to the ICFTU through their national union centre.
- the ten Global Union Federations (GUFs), the international representatives of unions organising in specific industry sectors or occupational groups (EI, ICEM, IFJ, ITGLWF, PSI, ITF, IFBWW, IMF, IUF, & UNI – for full names, see [www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)).
- the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD

An individual union will usually belong to a national union centre in its country, which will then affiliate to a world body such as the ICFTU. The same individual union will also usually affiliate to a GUF relevant to the industry where it has members. Often, unions with members in many different industries will belong to more than one GUF.

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# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



## Asia

Trade unionists in **Hong Kong** marched behind a two-headed octopus on May Day. The octopus symbolised unscrupulous employers and government officials who have been undermining the rights of workers. Workers echoed the Global Unions theme of "respect for workers' rights", using the arms of the octopus to represent eight recent attacks on workers.

About one thousand workers marched with the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) through the streets of the capital. The demonstrators included 150 domestic workers from other countries protesting against the Government's recent wage cut. Speakers at the rally paid homage to health workers and cleaners who were fighting the outbreak of SARS.

The event ended with a dramatic destruction of the two-headed octopus which, according to the HKCTU, showed how "the might of working class solidarity" will overcome the "deceitful alliance between chief government officials and employers."

Workers wearing t-shirts and carrying banners emblazoned with the respect logo, took part in a ten kilometre "marathon march" in Seoul, **South Korea** on May Day.

The marchers called for the introduction of a five day working week and equal rights for atypical workers. Mr. Lee, Nam-Soon, the president of the Korean trade union confederation

FKTU sent warm greetings to workers around the world "who are struggling for basic rights and decent life."

The ICFTU May Day manifesto was distributed to spectators and participants at the rally. FKTU members also attended rallies and meetings across South Korea in two weeks of activities which focused attention on workplace health and safety.

In **Japan**, May Day rallies in cities across the country attracted an estimated 360,000 people, protesting worsening economic conditions. Around 65,000 people attended the central rally in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park, organised by the Japanese Trade Union Confederation Rengo under the slogan "peace, human rights, environment, labour and cohabitation." Rengo President Kiyoshi Sasamori urged the government to adopt more measures to create jobs.

May Day leaflets featuring the Respect logo were distributed among the crowd, and speakers highlighted the importance of international solidarity. Rengo President Sasamori said: "As 1 May is an action day of Global Unions and we are members of the ICFTU, we will work to resolve problems, such as poverty, hunger, discrimination, suppression, conflicts and terrorism."

The exiled Burmese trade union movement FTUB held two underground May Day events inside **Burma**. Trade unions are illegal in Burma and abuse of workers' rights is ram-



*Hong Kong.*

pant.

The underground rallies attracted hundreds of teachers, health care workers, farmers and monks from the Thai-Burma region. The FTUB held workshops on trade unionism and international solidarity. Participants were able to receive basic health care before and after the programme.

The Confederation of **Mongolian** Trade Unions (CMTU) hosted a lively programme of activities on May Day. Demonstrations under the general slogan "respect for workers' rights" were held in the capital Ulaanbaatar and in provinces throughout Mongolia.

The Minister for Labour and Social Welfare took part in a talkshow organised by the CMTU. Two special media programmes focused on workers' rights, public sector reforms and proposals for a new labour law. A delegation of trade unionists met MPs to dis-



*South Korea.*

cuss their concerns.

CMTU's youth committee organised workplace seminars on labour law, health and safety, and young workers. A workshop for sixty young workers on globalisation and youth employment was held with the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

Workers in **Bahrain** celebrated their first official May Day holiday this year after the passage of a trade union law gave workers new rights and recognised the country's first trade union centre, the General Union of Bahrain Workers.

15,000 workers and their families marched through the streets of the capital Manama demanding a solution to Bahrain's unemployment, the setting of a minimum wage and trade union rights for government employees.



*Yasser Arafat joins the PGFTU on May Day.*

## Pacific

The **New Zealand** Council of



*India.*



Trade Unions (NZCTU) launched a young workers' video entitled "Respect" on May Day. Workers attended celebrations throughout the country, including marches, concerts and theatre.

Council President Ross Wilson announced that workers: "are celebrating the achievements of the trade union movement and calling for greater respect for workers' rights."

Thousands of trade unionists brought central Melbourne, **Australia** to a standstill on May 1st as they marched to demand an end to the Howard Government's attacks on union rights.

The traditional May Day march ended with trade union leaders calling for international solidarity and respect for workers. Leigh Hubbard, Secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, a branch of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU),

called for organised labour to "struggle to ameliorate the effects of capitalism, to reduce exploitation and win a bigger share of the profits for workers." Youth Officer, Camille Barbagallo, told the rally that young people were the victims of the Government's attacks on workers.

Two thousand workers held a noisy demonstration outside mining

multinational Rio Tinto's Perth headquarters on May 1st in support of union representatives from the USA, Canada and Australia who were on their way to attend the company's Australian AGM to demand decent corporate standards from the mining multinational.

Terry Bonds from the United Steel Workers of America, told the public meeting that Rio Tinto was acting like a "corporate thug" at its Kennecott Utah Copper facilities where the company was threatening to remove health benefits from workers' families. Miners' Union President Tony Maher condemned Rio Tinto's "callous treatment" of Australian mining families at Blair Athol.

Other trade union organisations in the region provided information about their May Day activities in **India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Singapore**. ●

## AFRICA

### West Africa

The **Benin** Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CSA) hosted a debate for workers on the international May Day theme Respect. The confederation also delivered a list of demands to the Minister of Employment.

Workers in Ouagadougou marched under the slogan "Respect for workers' rights" in demonstrations in **Burkina Faso** organised by the National Organisation of Free Trade Unions (ONSL) and the Burkina Trade Union Confederation (CSB).

Decent jobs and the fight against poverty were the two themes of May Day in **Cameroon**. As in previous



*Mauritania.*

years, the Cameroon Confederation of Free Trade Unions held a mass rally in the Omnisport stadium in the capital Yaoundé in the presence of the Minister for Labour.



Poverty in developing countries was the theme of the keynote speech given by the General Secretary of the **Mauritanian** trade union confederation CGTM on May 1st. "The right of workers to enjoy with dignity the fruits of their labour is far from being respected," he said. He went on to say that, in Mauritania itself, the lack of social dialogue showed the relevance of the Global Unions slogan Respect.

Rallies and marches throughout **Nigeria** took up the theme of peace and democracy on May Day. The Nigerian Labour Congress campaigned for mass participation in

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governance. The national rally in Eagle Square in Abuja was addressed by President Obasanjo as well as Congress President Adams Oshiomole.

A poster campaign in **Senegal** launched on May 1st called for Respect on 13 different labour issues. Marches took place in the capital Dakar and other cities throughout the country.

In neighbouring **Guinea**, the Union Syndicale des Travailleurs de Guinee called for a mobilisation of all workers in Guinea to demand Respect of freedoms and trade union rights, reinforcement of social dialogue, promotion and protection of employment and the battle against poverty.

## East Africa

Respect for human dignity was the main theme of a "partnership gathering" of workers, employers and government representatives organised by the **Djibouti** Workers' Union on May 1st.

Members of the **Kenya** Railway Workers' Union, marching with models of fire engines and trains, took up the theme of quality public services in demonstrations in the capital Nairobi on May 1st.

Workers also focused attention on HIV and child labour in a procession and rally addressed by President Mwai Kibaki and the Health Minister.



Workers in Ouagadougou marched under the slogan "Respect for workers' rights" in demonstrations in Burkina Faso organised by the National Organisation of Free Trade Unions (ONSL) and the Burkina Trade Union Confederation (CSB).

The Central Organisation of Trade Unions also organised a football match and entertainment by traditional choirs and dancers.

Thousands of workers took part in May Day celebrations in **Tanzania**. Tanzanian President Mkapa heard the demand for respect at a rally of workers in the national stadium in Dar es Salaam. The Communication and Transport Workers' Union released a statement stating: "Respect is a solution to disputes between workers and employers."

ice to members and fight for respect for workers' rights." COSATU extended solidarity to workers in countries governed by brutal regimes, and called for workers to be at the forefront of the global peace movement. In dozens of rallies across the country, trade union leaders celebrated the ninth anniversary of democracy but warned that workers were far from winning economic freedom. High unemployment, soaring food prices and the devastation of HIV/AIDS were increasing the difficulties facing poor households.

Sadly, the national celebrations in South Africa turned into tragedy when sixty workers died in a bus crash near Bethlehem in the Free State. The bus was ferrying members of the South African Municipal Workers' Union from Kimberley to a May Day rally in Qwaqwa when it plunged into a dam.

A group of high level union leaders endorsed the ICFTU May Day manifesto for 2003 in a gathering on April 30th in **Tunisia**. Mr. Abdessalem Jerad, Secretary General of the Tunisian General Workers' Union, welcomed the global unions' campaign. "The UGTT shares the idea of leading a worldwide campaign around the respect theme." ●

Senegal.

## Elsewhere in Africa

The trade union confederation UNTC used May Day to call for all parties to end the war ravaging the **Democratic Republic of Congo**. Respect for the basic rights of workers and unemployment among young people were also highlighted. In the city of Goma, members of twelve unions united to demand respect and to reflect on the devastation caused by the catastrophic volcanic eruption of 2002.

The **South African** trade union confederation COSATU rallied its members under the call "deepen serv-

# AMERICAS



## South America

Members of the **Brazilian** national metalworkers' trade union NCM-CUT marched in the name of international trade union solidarity and Respect on May 1st.

Sao Paulo, Brazil, hosted the world's largest May 1st event on workers' day. It is estimated that 1.5 million people attended the annual concert, organised by Forca Sindical. Activities included a lottery run by the trade union confederation, which gave away prizes, including apartments, cars and a year's free supermarket shopping.

50,000 workers marched through Santiago, **Chile** on May 1st in a demonstration for women's rights and public services organised by the union confederation CUT. The marchers called for equal pay, equal opportunities, and improved maternity leave. The deterioration of public services in Chile was also highlighted. CUT President Arturo Martinez said that the May Day rally was much better attended than in previous years – evidence, he said, of a resurgence of the trade union movement in Chile.

The right to social security and respect for workers' rights were the focus of demonstrations in towns and cities across **Colombia** on May 1st. There were protests against the privatisation of public services, the ALCA free trade zone, and military action in Iraq. In Bogota an estimated 150,000 demonstrators marched through the city.

The murder of trade union leader Juan de Jesus Gomez on May Day was a tragic reminder of the violence destroying Colombian society. Gomez, an officer of the rural workers' union,



Venezuela.

SINTRAINAGRO, was shot in the city of San Alberto on May 1st. His murder brought to over 130 the number of union leaders murdered in Colombia in the past year.

A large procession of public sector workers marched through the **Ecuadorian** capital Quito on May 1st demanding respect for the public sector and public sector workers. The trade unionists, affiliates of the global union federation, Public Services International, were also protesting against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (ALCA). Workers from oil companies also turned out, demonstrating against the privatisation of Ecuador's oil industry.

The city of Lima hosted **Peru's** first-ever workers' march on May 1st. The march, organised by the trade union confederation CUT, paid tribute to former political and social leaders in Peru.

The "Big March" organised by the **Venezuelan** confederation of trade

unions CTV on May Day ended in violence as demonstrators clashed with police.

Over two hundred thousand people marched through the capital Caracas waving national flags and banners. The demonstration was against unemployment,

poverty and political persecution of opposition leaders. Among the marchers were the general secretaries of ORIT – ICFTU's regional organisation for the Americas, and the International Federation of Building and Woodworkers (IFBWW), who carried banners bearing the Global Unions Respect logo.

Violence erupted when the march was blocked by a cordon of police and army officers. Bullets and teargas were fired, and one demonstrator was killed by police gunfire.

## North America

**Canadian** trade unions organised a hectic schedule of May Day activities from April 28th to May 3rd from coast to coast. The global themes – workers' rights, poverty, health and safety and public services – were addressed in forums, rallies, theatres and cinemas in events hosted by organisations affiliated to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). CLC President Ken Georgetti issued a statement on behalf of 2.5 million unionised Canadian workers. He urged Canadian governments to show respect for workers' rights. He called on the federal government to ban the import of goods made by child labour.

Postal workers in Canada held a "moment of noise". The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) was responding to a call by global union federation Union Network International (UNI) for affiliates to highlight the negative impact of globalisation on workers. In a message to postal workers, CUPW National President Deborah Bourque called for respect for workers' rights, respect for health and safety, and respect for the right of



Seattle.

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workers to live in peace. One hour into their shifts, workers were asked to make as much noise as possible to show that "workers didn't win rights and respect by remaining silent."

The Respect message was mixed with local concerns in demonstrations organised by the inter-union committee of metropolitan Montreal. Unions proclaimed "Virage a droite interdit" - "No right turn" - in rallies and at a meeting with Quebec's Prime Minister.

Owners of the Californian newspaper, Chinese Daily News, were under attack on May Day for depriving its employees in the **United States** of trade union rights. The newspaper, owned by the United Daily News Group of Taiwan, is published daily in Chinese. Some 150 writers, editors, photographers and sales staff have been fighting for union recognition and a fair contract for over two years. Staff at the newspaper have filed charges against the company with the National Labor Relations Board.

The communication Workers of America used May 1st to organise an electronic campaign using the Global Unions logo in English and Chinese, in support of the workers. Trade unionists worldwide were asked to



send a message to the newspaper's president Min Shen Su, urging it to respect the democratic choice of its employees.

A demonstration in Washington DC by hundreds of trade unionists on May Day helped get a fair deal for janitors. Hundreds of janitors who had attended the rally in downtown Washington were going off to their work cleaning offices when negotiators for the SEIU Local 82 emerged triumphant from contract negotiations just before 6pm. They had won a new contract which guaranteed health benefits for part-time janitors, sick days and wage increases.

As part of the ICFTU's May 1st Respect campaign, the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center launched a new publication Justice for All: a guide to workers' rights in the global economy.

Justice for All traces the history of worker rights, summarises essential international labour standards, and studies the impact of regional and global trade agreements on working conditions. The publication, aimed at workers, educators and human rights activists, contains strategies for im-



LSG Sky Chefs workers in San José, California.

proving respect for workers' rights worldwide. It is available at [www.solidaritycenter.org](http://www.solidaritycenter.org)

Airline catering workers in the United States were calling for Respect on May 1st. The action was organised by HERE – the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union. HERE represents 10,000 airline catering workers employed by LSG Sky Chefs, the world's largest airline catering company. Workers in 42 cities across the US took part in actions and carried placards displaying the word respect in many different languages.

## Caribbean

The **Barbados** Workers Union (BWU) called upon its members to celebrate May 1st in solidarity with trade unions all over the world by embracing the Respect theme. The BWU concentrated its May Day activities on

local charity projects, such as visits to geriatric hospitals, where the BWU presented wheel chairs to St Philip's Geriatric Hospital. A 'Fun Day' was also organised for children from children's homes across the island.

The **Bermuda** Public Services Union integrated the Respect theme and its sub-themes into its Intermediate Shop Stewards' Seminar programme being held 1-2 May 2003.

The **Guyana** Trade Union Congress marched through the capital Georgetown invoking international trade union solidarity and demanding Respect for workers' rights. Assembling at the Critchlow Labour College, the crowd were addressed by GTUC General Secretary Lincoln Lewis. He called on the Government of Guyana to "set a better example, which respects workers' rights, respects trade union rights and... removes the level of transgression that is currently taking place."

Other trade union organisations in the region provided information about their May Day activities in **Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay**. ●



Ecuador.

# EUROPE



## Central and Eastern Europe

Workers, pensioners and the unemployed attended commemorative meetings across **Albania** on May 1st. The President of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Albania included the ICFTU manifesto and the Respect theme in his speech to workers in Tirana. The Albanian government were asked to take action on a list of economic grievances. High on the list were rising unemployment, poverty and crime.

"Respect for workers' rights", "decent work", "better pay" were just a few of the slogans workers in **Moldova** marched to on this year's international workers' day.

The Respect theme was linked into national issues in a meeting held in Chisinau on May 1st by the Moldovan Confederation of Trade Unions (FGSRM). FGSRM President Petru Chiriac, addressing the crowd, highlighted the problems faced by the republic. "The majority of the population finds itself on the brink of poverty," he said.

**Georgia**'s May Day celebrations began several days before May 1st with an intensive media campaign launched by the Georgian union confederation, the GTUA. On May Day itself five thousand workers marched through the capital Tbilisi waving banners calling for "Respect" or "Pativiscema" in Georgian.

The crowd was addressed by the GTUA Chairman Irakli Tugushi and Deputy Chairman Zurab Didishvili who read the ICFTU May Day manifesto. The rally called for the government to take action against corruption and to end poverty.

May Day in Georgia also included a performance at the rally by a group of popular Georgian singers, an offi-



Georgia.



Workers at the Moscow rally promoted the Global Unions Respect theme, the ICFTU May Day manifesto, along with national demands. ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder took part in the demonstration in Moscow.

cial reception for trade unions, business and NGOs, and participation by the GTUA Chairman in a television talk show on labour issues.

The GTUA emphasised that May 1st was a day of international solidarity among workers.

More than two million people attended May Day demonstrations throughout **Russia**. The three ICFTU affiliated trade union centres organised rallies and processions in cities throughout the country.

Workers at the Moscow rally promoted the Global Unions Respect theme, the ICFTU May Day manifesto, along with national demands. ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder took part in the demonstration in Moscow. Young trade union leaders demanded respect for young workers, free education and decent work. Special "Respect" posters, linking up to the 5 sub-themes, were produced for the Moscow rally.

In Volgograd, a seminar and street demonstration on "Get respect through unions" took place on April 28th. In Ekaterinburg May 1st was declared a youth day.

## Western Europe

The **Belgian** trade union confederation FGTB called on its members to promote the Respect theme on May 1st. The FGTB organised demon-

strations and rallies in cities across Belgium, including Brussels, Namur and Leuven. In Brussels, Mamounata Cisse, ICFTU Assistant General Secretary, in her speech at an FGTB event, called for Respect for fundamental social rights all over the world.

Mia De Vits, FGTB President, looked ahead to Belgium's national elections. "We call on the next government to ensure that respect for human rights and workers' rights is at the heart of Belgian and European foreign policy."

For the first time in 45 years, the **Greek-Cypriot** and **Turkish-Cypriot** unions held joint celebrations on May 1st. Over four thousand workers took part in a joint rally that was only possible because of the recent opening of the border.



Mia de Vits (FGTB) and Mamounata Cisse (ICFTU) in Belgium.

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In their speeches, the trade union leaders of both communities expressed their trust in the future and will to cooperate. Demitris Kittenis, General Secretary of the Greek-Cypriot confederation SEK, announced a plan to work towards the employment of Turkish-Cypriots in the Greek part of the island. General President Onder Konuloglu of Turk-Sen spoke about the astonishing friendship demonstrated by people from both sides.

400,000 workers turned out on May Day to protest against the **French** Government's plans for pension reform. 40,000 workers marched in Paris in a joint rally organised by the CFDT and other trade unions. Force Ouvrière held a separate rally and used the Respect theme in its speeches and poster campaigns throughout France, as did some regional branches of the CFDT.

Thousands of workers marched through Central London calling for better employment and trade union rights for workers in **Britain** and abroad.

Trade unions joined the annual London May Day march to a rally in Trafalgar Square where they paddled in the fountains as they listened to music and speeches. The crowd heard speeches from union leaders such as TUC General Secretary Elect Brendan Barber, ICFTU official P. Kamalam and Colombian Mineworkers' President Francesco Ramires.

Mick Connolly, Regional Secretary for the TUC London Region (SER-TUC) said the march was "a protest for better global labour standards, debt cancellation and respect for communities and the environment."

The TUC also called for May 1st to be made a national holiday in line with other European countries.

The **Irish** Confederation of Trade Unions organised a full menu of ac-



Great Britain.

tivities on this year's May Day. Top of the list were a march, family festival and charity quiz. Festivities lasted two weeks and also included performances by a Dublin theatre company of the play Working Class Hero. The closing event was an evening discussion on "Respecting diversity locally and globally". Belfast's Lord Mayor and Gemma Adaba, the ICFTU's representative to the UN took part in the event.

More than 600,000 young people were expected to show up for a traditional May Day rock concert in Rome, **Italy**. The three ICFTU affiliates, CGIL, CISL and UIL, echoed the international Respect theme in demonstrations and rallies in 100 cities across Italy.

The General Workers' Union held a ceremony at **Malta's Workers' Monument** demanding Respect for workers on May 1st. May Day is marked every year in Malta by political parties, NGOs and



## Greece.

trade unions. The Nationalist Party held a mass meeting at the Luxol Grounds while the Malta Labour Party held a traditional demonstration through the streets of the capital. The President of the Republic and the Archbishop of Malta met employees in workplaces in Malta. A common message exhorted unity among workers and respect from employers.

Young activists from LO Norway were involved in a number of May Day celebrations and pop concerts. The slogan "work for all" was the main theme of the day, with a call for a job guarantee for people under 25 years old. LO Norway President Gerd Liv Valla addressed a trade union rally in the city of Trondheim.

Opposition to the war in Iraq was the main theme of demonstrations in **Spain** organised by the two main trade union confederations, the UGT and CC.OO. UGT called for peace and employment, while CC.OO. called for Respect for international law.

Other trade union organisations in the region provided information about their May Day activities in **Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Serbia, Sweden, and the Ukraine.** ●

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