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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU)

ICFTU OnLine...

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India has the most child workers in the world

Brussels 26th October 2004 (ICFTU Online): Just a few days before the start of an international conference in India on child labour, the ICFTU is publishing a new eight-page report (<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991220678&Language=EN>) on abuse of children in that country. Its message is clear: despite its record economic performance, India is still plagued by immense social hardship, with 400 million people living below the poverty line. That poverty is a major cause of the widespread practice of child labour: with its 60 million exploited children, India has the largest number of child workers in the world. They work as agricultural workers, domestic servants, weavers, rag dealers, diamond cutters, textile workers, mechanics, stone breakers and so on, the list is long. In addition to poverty, the caste system, poor application of laws and gender-based discrimination are also factors contributing to child labour in India. Many children are also caught up in the servitude resulting from their families' contraction of debts.

The ICFTU report stresses the need for a renewal of social policy in India: the economic boom has done nothing for a large section of the Indian population. There is no doubt that this issue will be discussed at the conference to be held in Hyderabad from 2 to 5 November 2004 under the heading "Out of work into school - children's right to education is non negotiable." That conference will bring together trade unions, NGOs, donor organisations and politicians. In the framework of the conference the Dutch trade union confederation FNV will be holding a seminar specifically for trade unions, which will get an opportunity to exchange their views and good trade union practices in combating child labour.

The trade union movement is leading a vigorous campaign to combat child labour. The findings of this report are incontrovertible: this is an emergency!

The ICFTU represents 148 million workers in 234 affiliated organisations in 152 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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