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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU)

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Child labour report released to coincide with major international conference in India

Brussels 29th October 2004 (ICFTU Online): Ahead of an international conference on child labour to be held in Hyderabad, India (2- 5 November 2004), the ICFTU is publishing a new eight-page report (<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991220678&Language=EN>) on the use of child labour in the south Asian country. Delegates from across the world will gather at the conference to discuss the theme of "out of work into school - children's right to education is non negotiable." The conference will bring together trade unions, NGOs, donor organisations and politicians. During the conference, the ICFTU-affiliated Dutch trade union confederation (FNV) will be hold a seminar specifically for trade unions, providing an opportunity for delegates to exchange their views and experiences on trade union initiatives to help eradicate child labour.

Despite its record economic performance, India is still plagued by immense social hardship - 400 million people live below the poverty line. Poverty is both a consequence and a cause of the widespread use of child labour. With 60 million children affected, India has the largest number of child labourers in the world.

Children in India work as agricultural workers, domestic servants, weavers, rag dealers, diamond cutters, textile workers, mechanics, and stone breakers and in the process, large numbers are denied the chance of going to school. 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 servitude resulting from their families' accumulation 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. Outlining the strenuous efforts of Indian trade unions and NGOs to combat the child labour, the ICFTU report highlights the serious nature of the issue and uses case studies to show how trade unions can contribute to effectively tackling the global problem.

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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