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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU)

ICFTU OnLine...

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ICFTU heads for historic changes at World Congress

Brussels, 23 November 2004 (ICFTU online): Ahead of its 18th World Congress (5th - 10th December), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) today outlined in greater detail its plans and aspirations for the 5 day event and published its draft congress resolutions which will determine how the international trade union movement will operate in years to come.

Under the banner of "globalising solidarity - building a global union movement for the future", delegates will gather at the Congress in Miyazaki, Japan, hosted by the ICFTU's Japanese affiliate - RENGO, to debate and decide on issues of historic importance. The Congress will feature notable speakers including Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa and Finnish President Tarja Halonen - co-chairs of the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Director General Juan Somavia and other dignitaries.

Over 700 delegates from the 234 ICFTU-affiliated organisations will attend the Congress. A central issue in the debate is the unification of the international labour movement to create a new international trade union organisation. As outlined in the Congress theme report (<http://www.icftu.org/www/pdf/Globalising%20Solidarity.pdf> - 414KB), presented by General Secretary Guy Ryder, a new organisation would bring together the ICFTU and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) as well as democratic trade union centres which belong to neither of the two international organisations.

"Trade unions need to reach out to the many millions missing from their ranks and to gain ground and influence in relation to business and governments. At the same time we need to internationalise trade union activities much more effectively, bringing national and international action much closer together, if we are to succeed in changing the course of globalisation. The real need for this is paramount in industrial countries just as it is in the developing world" said Ryder. "If we are to achieve this, and our goals of more effective representation, greater visibility and stronger influence for working people in the global economy, then we need to seriously assess the advantages that unification will bring."

Structural issues including unification and reform of the ICFTU's working methods are covered in the main congress resolution and presented in the theme report. A further 14 resolutions (<http://congress.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991220576>) to be decided upon in Japan underline the unswerving commitment of ICFTU affiliates to trade union rights, gender equality, the fight against all forms of discrimination and other fundamental rights in every country across the world.

In a recent interview (<http://congress.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991220799>), Guy Ryder took the opportunity to outline other issues of prominent importance which will be discussed during the congress of the world's largest trade union organisation. The interview is featured on the ICFTU's dedicated congress website (<http://congress.icftu.org/>), launched today, which will help connect its worldwide membership to the event's debates and conclusions.

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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