

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU)

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Launch of global poverty movement sets challenges to world leaders

Porto Alegre, 27th January 2005 - The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), the biggest ever global mobilization to hold governments accountable for the promises they made to eradicate poverty, was launched today at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, expressed his solidarity and support for the global call and delivered a speech before the 12.000 people that gathered at the Gigantinho stadium wearing white bands, the symbol of the campaign.

The Global Call to Action against Poverty is a worldwide alliance of hundreds of organisations. These comprise grassroots organizations, trade unions, women's groups, non-governmental organizations, human right advocates, international civil society and faith groups. The campaign is calling on world leaders to fulfill their commitments on trade justice, more and better aid and full debt cancellation. It is also demanding transparency and accountability from all governments in their plans to eliminate poverty and reach the Millennium Development Goals.

"This should be the year in which governments keep their promises and respond to the more than one billion people who are living in absolute poverty, who demand justice," said Guy Ryder, GCAP representative and General Secretary of the ICFTU, a founding member of the campaign. At the launch today, Ryder highlighted that achieving more and better jobs for workers, with full respect for their basic rights, as the most important single means of increasing poor peoples' incomes and cutting poverty.

Speaking at the launch today, John Samuel on behalf of GCAP said, "We need a shift in national and international policies and agendas. At a time when bombs, security and terror dominate the political agenda it's imperative to bring poverty into the centre of government thinking. We just can't afford to keep quiet when 50,000 people die of poverty related causes every day and the rich and the powerful chose to ignore it. GCAP is a wake up call to people in both rich and poor countries to mobilize and force their governments to take action."

Leaders around the world have made endless promises to end poverty. In 2000, they committed to halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 by signing the Millennium Development Goals; to establish fair trade rules at the World Trade Organization development round in 2001; and to end the burden of debt that forces low income countries to pay \$100 million every day to their creditors.

"The truth is that little has been done. At the current rates of progress, it will take more than a 100 years, not ten, for many countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals", says Wahu Kaara, a GCAP representative from Africa.

During 2005 millions of people are expected to demand that world leaders fulfill their promises at three key "White Band Days": the G8 summit in July in UK, at the UN General Assembly in September and in December at the WTO Ministerial meeting in HK. The white band is a symbol of the united call to end poverty once and for all.

"This is a really crucial moment in the global fight against poverty. We are a massive and diverse group which has come together this year to demand change. It is high time for action on trade justice, improved aid and debt cancellation. So, our message today is that united we cannot be ignored by our governments," said Coumba Toure from GCAP Africa who presented President Lula with a white band during the launch event.

The GCAP demands that in 2005 world leaders:

- * Immediately end dumping and rich country subsidies that keep people in poverty.
- * Enact measures to protect public services from enforced liberalisation and privatisation, secure the right to food and affordable access to essential drugs and strengthen corporate accountability
- * Increase accountability and transparency of governments and international organizations in the formulation of international trade rules and national trade policies.
- * Give more, untied and better aid now to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- * Meet the agreed target of 0.7% of national income in overseas aid.
- * Ensure aid is directed towards achieving development objectives.
- * Cancel debt - rich countries, the World Bank and the IMF should cancel 100% of the debt of the poorest countries in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals.
- * National efforts to eliminate poverty and to reach the Millennium Goal that are developed and implemented in a way that is democratic, transparent and accountable to citizens.

Website: www.whiteband.org

The ICFTU represents 148 million workers in 231 affiliated organisations in 150 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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