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Global Union women press for further action on gender equality at UN's CSW

Brussels, 28 February 2005 (ICFTU Online): Global Union Women will be out in force at the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW49) which starts today in New York (28 February- 11 March 2005). Joined by thousands of civil society representatives including a 50-strong trade union delegation, government ministers and high-level delegates from over 100 countries will discuss the most burning issues affecting women across the world, and review progress made in meeting the objectives set at the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing, 1995.

"We are disappointed that some governments are attempting to renege on commitments made 10 years ago" said Sharan Burrow, President of the ICFTU. "We are sending a clear message to governments that we expect nothing less than a strong reaffirmation of the full Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) with its twelve critical areas of concern," said Burrow ahead of the publication of a new ICFTU dossier - "Great Expectations - Mixed Results" - trade union assessment of how on track the world is to meeting the Beijing objectives. The central message is that governments across the world need to intensify their efforts to achieve full equality between women and men in all spheres of life.

The issue of women and the economy will come under the spotlight at the CSW49 and the Global Unions' delegation will be voicing its concerns about the meager results in achieving objectives for gender equality at work. Trade union women will continue to call for policies which promote employment growth with decent work, social protection and the respect for fundamental workers' rights.

Global Unions will host two panel discussions over the course of the 12 day event. They will draw attention to unrestrained levels of violations of trade union rights in Colombia where intimidation and physical violence against trade unionists continue unabated. Since 2003, there has also been a sharp rise in the proportion of women victims of anti-trade union violence - 156 women trade unionists received death threats in 2004; there were 12 assassinations and 7 arbitrary detentions. The challenges faced by women trade unionists in Colombia form the centerpiece of a leaflet (*) to be distributed during CSW49 which calls on participants to sign a petition. Participants will be urging the Colombian government to put an end to the assassinations of trade unionists and the impunity of the perpetrators of these crimes, and to demand the full respect for trade union rights in the Latin American country by signing the Global Unions' petition. The issue of decent work for women workers will be the focal point of the second panel discussion which intends to critically examine the challenges faced by women working in different sectors.

Poverty remains an issue which has debilitating effects on women, says Global Unions. Women in the developing world and those working in the agricultural sector and the informal economy suffer some of the most distressing forms of poverty. Highlighting Global Unions' campaigns to combat this, the delegation will present examples from its organizing campaign and reaffirm trade union commitment to the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), launched earlier this year.

(*) to view the Global Unions' leaflet on women in Colombia, produced on the occasion of the CSW49, click here:
http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/Colombia-ENCallingforjusticeinColombia.pdf

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 233 affiliated
organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a partner
in Global Unions: http://www.global-unions.org

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2
224 0206 or +32 476 621 018.