

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Trade unions call for decent work to be centre of UN reform agenda

Brussels, Friday 17 June (ICFTU online): International trade union organisations are calling on the UN to put decent work at the heart of its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in a statement submitted by the ICFTU and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) to the UN hearings with civil society and the private sector, taking place in New York on 23-24 June 2005.

In the course of the two-day hearings, civil society organizations will have the opportunity to voice their concerns on the report of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan published earlier this year, entitled "In Larger Freedom", and to make recommendations for the UN's "Millennium plus Five" summit in September 2005.

"Fighting against poverty has always been a cornerstone of the trade union movement's work. The international labour movement is unprepared to accept poverty as a given and is a strong supporter of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) and the objective of a world free of poverty, hunger, pandemic diseases, conflicts and wars," said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder. "As an integral part of its agenda on poverty, the UN must give adequate attention to building the prospects for decent work, including trade union rights - essential if anti-poverty initiatives are ever to succeed. Otherwise we risk the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remaining only goals and never becoming a reality. This means adding decent work as a 9th Millennium Development Goal, and mainstreaming the issue of decent work across the existing MDGs."

WCL General Secretary Willy Thys said that, "Everyone speaks of a fair globalisation nowadays. Achieving this requires fair income distribution, an issue at the very heart of the trade union agenda. The decent work agenda provides such mechanisms because it goes beyond economic growth; it also focuses on growth that generates decent jobs, and on getting resources to the poor through more and better social protection, and promotion of human rights and workers' rights."

The international trade union movement underlined its support for many other issues raised in Kofi Annan's report, including the proposal to establish three Councils of the UN as the principal organs of the international body - a strengthened ECOSOC and Security Council, and a new Human Rights Council. Endorsing the proposal for this Human Rights Council to serve as a permanent body to react to human rights crises, the international labour organizations also spoke in favour of the UN's ECOSOC having greater authority to engage with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation at the intergovernmental and political level on economic and social issues.

"These hearings provide the chance to move decisively towards the

Millennium Development Goals", Ryder and Thys concluded. "The Millennium plus five review Summit is a crucial moment for action and should mark the occasion for the unveiling of sweeping UN reform. The decisions made in New York will ultimately have an impact for generations to come and can achieve a breakthrough on poverty in 2005."

For the full statement, see:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221937&Language=EN>

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

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