

Unions at Forefront of Global Poverty Action Day

Brussels, 1 July 2005 (ICFTU OnLine): Trade unions from around the world have been in the forefront of today's "White Band Day" global mobilization against poverty, the largest movement of its kind in history. Rallies, demonstrations and meetings around the world, involving hundreds of thousands of people, have been organized under the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), a coalition of trade unions, community and religious groups, women's organizations and other development and anti-poverty movements. The GCAP, symbolized by the wearing of white armbands and headbands, is calling for decisive global action for debt relief to the poorest countries, greatly increased development aid, and justice in the world trade system.

World trade union leaders met with UK Prime Minister and G8 host Tony Blair this Tuesday in London to press home the case for decisive action by the richest countries.

"The ICFTU and its Global Unions partners, are campaigning to put poverty at the top of the international agenda, with key meetings of the G8 countries this month, the United Nations General Assembly in September, and the World Trade Organisation's Ministerial meeting in Hong Kong in December. Creating decent jobs for all is central to ending world poverty, and trade unions have a central role to play in this", said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder.

A rally of more than 50,000 people organised by trade unions and pressure groups in Madrid, Spain on Monday launched a week of activities culminating in actions in more than 70 countries today, including demonstrations and symbolic wrapping of major buildings and famous landmarks in cities around the globe. Staff from the ICFTU, Education International and other trade union bodies in the International Trade Union House in Brussels converged in front of the building this afternoon to add their voice to those of trade unionists in Nepal, Mozambique, India, the UK, Canada, France, Italy, Japan and a wide range of other countries which have been taking part in GCAP events.

Further "White Band Days" will take place on 10 September, when the UN General Assembly reviews progress towards achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals, and on 10 December as the World Trade Organisation gathers in Hong Kong for its Ministerial Meeting.

"Much has been said by world leaders about the evils of poverty, and many pledges have been made to help people build decent lives for themselves and their families. But the fact is that hundreds of millions of women, men and children are still living in destitution, with little hope of a better life. The trade union movement around the world will continue to work with others to make sure that real action is taken to end global poverty", said Ryder.

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 233 affiliated organizations in 154 countries and territories.

The 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 0212.

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