

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine...

107/090905

Helsinki Conference: ICFTU President Calls for "Global Social Floor", Urgent Action to Tackle Inequality

Brussels, 9 September 2005 (ICFTU OnLine): In a speech on 8 September to major international conference in Helsinki, ICFTU President Sharan Burrow has called for international action to put in place a "Global Social Floor", to tackle global poverty and inequality. Citing a broad series of indicators, from the widening gap between rich and poor within and between countries, continuing high levels of unemployment particularly amongst young workers, and tens of millions of children receiving no education, Burrow focused on the "desperate requirement" for international action around fair income distribution and adequate social protection. This reflects similar concerns expressed recently by the United Nations, over the exclusive focus on economic growth leading to a race to the bottom with declining employment protection and weakening of employment laws and regulations. The International Labour Organisation must be at the centre of a new global effort to change the course of globalisation, to meet the needs of workers and the poorest in developing and in industrialised countries, according to Burrow.

Along with respect for core labour standards, governments must put in place comprehensive and coherent policies to generate productive employment in rural and urban areas, with particular attention to health and education. "No sustainable economy can be built on the basis of workers in poverty" she said. The absence of a legal minimum wage in many countries, and declining official minimum wages coupled with violations of fundamental workers' rights in developed countries like the USA and Australia, is a key problem which must be effectively addressed if progress is to be made.

The Conference, opened by Finnish President Tarja Halonen and Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, both of whom were key-note speakers at the December 2004 ICFTU World Congress in Miyazaki Japan, is the culmination of the "Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy" <<http://www.helsinkiprocess.fi/>> , involving a wide range of leaders from government, civil society and international institutions. ICFTU Assistant General Secretary Jose Olivio Oliveira is a member of one of the main "tracks" of the process, dealing with the global economic agenda. The Conference is also expected to discuss possible continuation of the Helsinki Process, in light of growing worldwide concern at the current model of globalisation.

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 234 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0212 .

You are currently subscribed to icftu-online as: Rainer.Gries@fes.de
To unsubscribe send a blank email to leave-icftu-online-167589G@forum.icftu.org