

ICFTU OnLine...

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Unions look for action to implement promises after UN Summit

BRUSSELS, 16 September 2005, ICFTU Online: ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder warned world leaders not to turn their backs on the world's poor following extremely mixed results at the UN Millennium + 5 Summit held in New York that finished today.

"This summit did not deliver enough on poverty, security, United Nations reform, or the reaffirmation of the UN as the core of the multilateral system. But that is not a reason to give up hope. On the contrary, we should redouble our efforts to reclaim lost ground, ensure that the promises are kept, and that the unfinished agenda is completed." Ryder said today. "As our attention now turns to the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial, world leaders must ensure that the meeting delivers on a fair and just trade system which supports the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the broader development agenda."

Responding to the outcomes of the summit and following his speech to the UN General Assembly, Ryder praised the countries that stuck to their original agenda and affirmed the importance of the MDGs, the decent work agenda with respect for workers' rights as poverty-reducing strategies, the Peace-Building Commission, gender equality, universal education, and other development priorities. In so doing, they saved the summit from irrelevance. However, disappointment was inescapable in face of the stalling of progress on other equally important priorities such as setting up a Human Rights Council, and a Security Council capable of delivering on peace and security.

"This summit was to provide a kick-start to meeting some of the development targets world leaders set back in 2000. It is disappointing that not only have we already missed the first target, having an equal number of girls as boys in education, but that the Outcome Document does not even mention this fact," Ryder continued.

"On the other hand, let us not forget that two weeks ago many of the important parts of the document seemed in jeopardy", said Ryder. "And let us not forget that there is a commitment to ensuring that a decent work agenda is implemented," he added. "In addition, we have a reiteration of the G8 debt forgiveness deal and a call to go further, which is important, given that the IMF and the World Bank have started to suggest that this target can't be met. Despite weakened language, we still have the support for timetables to reach the target of 0.7% of GDP for development aid. We now call on industrialized countries not to lose the momentum generated by the G8 Summit, toward sticking to these timetables."

"We are of course alarmed that at a time of such world instability member nations have failed to agree on disarmament, stopping nuclear proliferation or on reforming the United Nations to fulfil its crucial role as a builder of a just and peaceful world," he continued.

"But now is not the time for recriminations - now is the time for action and accountability. Trade unions are watching their governments closely to make sure they keep the promises made, and advance the unfinished agenda of the UN World Summit. Nations must work hard over the next three months, building on the gains of the Summit to ensure that the WTO meeting in Hong Kong gives the people of this planet a chance to break the cycle of poverty through a fair and just trade system. The trade union movement and the world's largest ever anti-poverty coalition will be working hard to once again remind our leaders to "wake up to poverty".

Guy Ryder's speech to the United Nations General Assembly can be found at: <http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/Guy-speech.final.pdf> (check against delivery)

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 231 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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