

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Burma UN Security Council discussion a <first step in the right direction>, says ICFTU

Brussels, 20 December 2005 (ICFTU OnLine). The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions today welcomed last Friday's first-ever discussion of the Burma situation by the UN Security Council (UNSC), urging the UN's top decision-making body on peace and security matters to remain vigilant and determined on the issue.

"We are extremely pleased that lobbying by ICFTU member organisations in over a dozen countries on all continents has contributed to the Security council's decision, which we see as a first step in the right direction", ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder commented in Brussels today.

In October, the ICFTU had called on its affiliated organisations in current UNSC member countries to urge their respective governments' support for holding such a discussion and invited its members in other countries to call on their governments to support the move. At the same time, it had informed the International Labour Organisation (ILO) of its action. The ILO Governing Body last November decided to intensify its review of the forced labour situation in Burma, with a possible view to step-up pressure on Rangoon's military junta at the time of the ILO's next annual Conference, in June 2006.

In November, the ICFTU received reports on action taken by affiliates in 15 countries including Brazil, Nigeria, the USA, the UK and, notably, the Russian Federation, whose position, like China's, was seen as a potential threat to any discussion being held in the Council.

"While we are still quite a distance away from a Security Council resolution on Burma, we are encouraged by this first move. It vindicates our position, going back nearly fifteen years, that the Burmese junta's appalling record on every aspect of governance, from education to narcotics, through economy, HIV-AIDS, labour rights and democratic process, cannot be seen in isolation, as a mere internal problem", Ryder commented today. "When other avenues fail to bring about the desired changes and are simply ignored by the dictators, it is our responsibility to Burma's workers and people to step up the pressure and push for a binding Security Council resolution. I have no doubt we will reach that point, eventually", he concluded.

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers through its 236 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. The ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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