

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine...

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WSF - Bamako: Forming Alliances to Advance the Agenda for Decent Work in Africa

Brussels, 23 January 2006 (ICFTU OnLine) Within the framework of the Bamako World Social Forum (Mali), the two international trade union confederations, ICFTU and WCL, in partnership with the Global Progressive Forum (GPF) and Solidar, hosted a debate on decent work.

"Poverty must be eradicated through employment" were the opening words pronounced by ICFTU Assistant General Secretary Mamounata Cissé at this work session bringing together trade unionists, mainly African and European, and civil society activists from around the world. Her ideas were reiterated by one of the WSF's main organisers and promoters, Aminata Traoré, who warned that the concept of decent work was floundering. "If there is one region of the world where the notion of decent work is relevant, it is clearly Africa," she affirmed, denouncing the empty promises of globalisation and the practices of western multinationals, which exploit the continent's natural resources without any regard for the welfare of its peoples.

The debate was enriched by the attendance of numerous women trade unionists, who were also accompanied by male trade unionists in highlighting the gender dimension. Adrien Akouete, President of the WCL, insisted on the growing need for trade unions to organise informal workers, especially women and young people.

The President of ICFTU-AFRO, Mody Guiro, stressed the crucial role to be played by governments in the implementation of the decent work agenda and called for corporate responsibility to ensure that the agenda becomes a reality on the continent. The views of Mali's employer organization were also expressed, through their president.

Thanks to the active participation of an ILO representative, the significance of the ILO conventions was underlined as the cornerstone of the decent work agenda. Toolsyraj Benyudin, President of the DOAWTU, the WCL's regional organisation for Africa, insisted on the need to ensure that the ratification of these conventions be followed up by their implementation on the ground, a task which relies on the strengthening of social dialogue.

The conference was brought to a close with the conclusions of the AFRO and DOAWTU representatives, who emphasised the ideas put forward by Harlem Désir, European Member of Parliament and Vice President of the GPF, for whom the battle against neo-liberalism calls for alliances built on the issue of decent work between trade unions, civil society organisations and other progressive forces.

The international trade union movement is set to move in this direction this year with the creation of a new international trade union organisation and the consolidation of alliances with other civil society organisations.

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The ICFTU represents 155 million workers in 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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