

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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KARACHI: Trade unions to put decent work on the World Social Forum agenda

BRUSSELS, 23 March 2006 (ICFTU Online): Within the framework of the Karachi Polycentric World Social Forum, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its affiliate the Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF) are holding a trade union panel on Sunday 26 March on the themes of privatization, investment, and the impact on national economies and the working class, with attention to the decent work agenda in the Asian region and the role of trade unions.

Asia is a continent that still faces a major problem of poverty. According to the Asian Development Bank, 60 percent (1.9 billion people) of Asia's population lives on an average of less than US\$2 a day. The number of people living in extreme poverty (earning less than one dollar a day) totals about 690 million or 21.5 percent of the population. The soaring rates of unemployment in many countries have led millions to seek work under the most exploitative and dangerous conditions simply in order to survive.

As emphasized by the ICFTU, the ILO agenda for decent work in Asia states that the success of any poverty reduction strategy lies in the promotion of employment, workers' rights, protection and representation. The ICFTU and the PWF are insistent that poverty reduction strategies can only succeed if they are firmly geared towards the creation of decent work. These considerations will form the core of a debate involving representatives of the ICFTU, ICFTU-APRO, the PWF, and other trade union and civil society organisations from Asia and around the world.

Other trade union-organized activities during the WSF include a Labour Forum on Tuesday 28 March. The World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) will be present in Karachi, as will ISCOS-CISL (Italy) which is organising two initiatives, a workshop on labour, social and human rights and an activity on women working in the domestic sector. Both these initiatives will also take place on March 26th, starting at 15.00.

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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