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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Trade unions successfully resist the World Bank and the IMF

Brussels, 20 April 2006: Amidst growing consensus within global civil society that the World Bank and the IMF do not address public concerns when demanding that governments implement major economic policy changes, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) today released a new report, Fighting for Alternatives: Case Studies of Successful Trade Union Resistance to the Policies of the World Bank and IMF. The report was released to coincide with the 2006 Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, to be held on April 22-24.

According to the ICFTU report, trade unions and their civil society allies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America have organized workers to defeat World Bank and IMF-sponsored initiatives such as the privatization of essential services, transport restructuring, and labour market reform. "The successful resistance by trade unions against the World Bank and the IMF shows that the labour movement is a strong and efficient tool in the fight against poverty and for the security of workers' livelihoods" said Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the ICFTU. In many of the cases presented in the report, trade unions and their allies not only succeeded in reversing these initiatives, but also in obtaining alternative policies that took account of their concerns.

Based on interviews with union leaders and on other first-hand accounts of trade union campaigns, the new report presents detailed case studies of popular campaigns against IMF and World Bank initiatives and the successful adoption of alternative policies in countries including:

- * Bulgaria, where unions organized a national mobilization that led to the overturn of a World Bank education sector restructuring programme and an IMF proposal that would have reduced workers' wages;
- * Croatia, where five labour federations set aside their differences to rally opposition to an IMF-World Bank proposal for labour reform designed to make it easier for employers to fire workers;
- * Indonesia, where the nation's constitutional court ruled against the IMF-backed privatization of a major utility after labour unions and civil society groups filed a lawsuit contesting the government's right to privatize the utility;
- * Uruguay, where trade unions took the lead in organizing a historic national referendum against water privatization;
- * Zambia, where unions and their allies forced the IMF to rescind debt relief conditions that required privatization of strategic public enterprises and prohibited the hiring of new teachers.

The report also looks at the efforts of the international trade union movement and its allies around the world to push the IMF and World Bank

to adopt more favourable policies towards working people and the poor, which have lead to important changes in these institutions' policies on core labour standards and debt relief for impoverished countries.

The ICFTU report is now available for download on the ICFTU website: <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223658&Language=EN>.

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

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 474 621 018.

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