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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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New ICFTU report deplores massive abuses committed against migrant workers in United Arab Emirates

Brussels, 21 April 2006: A new ICFTU report on core labour standards in United Arab Emirates deplores massive abuses committed against migrant workers who constitute about 95% of the working force in the private sector. The report has been prepared to coincide with the UAE's trade policy review at the WTO this week.

Despite the fact the UAE have ratified both ILO Conventions against discrimination, violations of migrant workers' fundamental rights are a persistent phenomenon in the UAE. Abuses committed against migrant workers include non-payment of wages, extended working hours without overtime compensation and unsafe working environments resulting in death and injury.

In addition, the report highlights that the UAE have not ratified the core ILO Conventions protecting trade union rights. Under the current legislation trade unions are not allowed for either migrant workers or UAE nationals, and collective bargaining is not recognised. The government has announced a new law allowing unions, including in the construction sector, to be in place by the end of the year 2006. "It is crucial that this new law be consistent with ILO core Conventions 87 and 98" said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder. "In particular it is essential that foreign workers be allowed to join a union, and that the principle according that unions must be free to decide their own structures, is fully respected in the new legislation", added Ryder.

The report expresses serious concern about the persistence of the worst forms of child labour in the UAE. While the government has recently taken some initiatives to address the issue of young children working as camel jockeys, much remains to be done to put an end to these practices. The report further highlights that trafficking in women and girls used as prostitutes or domestic servants and in men used as servants, labourers, and unskilled workers continue to be extremely serious problems which the Government has failed to address in any satisfactory way.

Link to the report:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223700&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>

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