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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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28 April 2006: 11th International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers

Brussels, 27 April 2005 - 28 April is World Day for Health and Safety at Work, a day that sees the commemoration of the workers killed or injured at work over the last twelve months due to unsatisfactory production methods or working conditions. Tens of thousands of people around the world will be taking part today in memorial activities for all the workers who have lost their lives through industrial injury or disease.

The figures announced by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are by no means heartening. Every year, over two million men and women lose their lives to their jobs and almost 160 million new cases of work-related illnesses are registered.

"The figures are alarming," said Willy Thys, general secretary of the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), "If you work it out, you realise that there are 5000 work-related deaths around the world every day. Measures must be taken on the ground to bring down these figures as soon as possible. The anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe should make us think."

The World Day for Health and Safety at Work is also the occasion to examine the impact on workers of factors such as violence at work, chemical substances, asbestos or HIV/AIDS.

One of the most important themes of this year's commemoration is undoubtedly the international trade union movement's call for a total ban on the sale and use of asbestos. Some 100 000 people are estimated to die every year as a result of their exposure to this mortal substance, not to mention all those suffering from long-term asbestos-related illnesses.

Almost 40 million people around the world are currently HIV positive. 80% of them are adults. More than half of the people infected form part of the active population and are aged between 15 and 49. Many such workers, on reaching the state that they can no longer work, have to depend on their young children to support them and cover their household needs.

Despite the fact that the fight against HIV/AIDS is a key item on the international agenda (it is one of the millennium goals), the results are non-existent. The international trade union movement recently appealed to the G8 leaders (Germany, Canada, the United States, France, Italy, Japan and United Kingdom, plus EU representatives) to take immediate measures at their next Summit at the beginning of July in Moscow to honour their commitments regarding development aid and participation in the Global Fund to fight AIDS.

Good working conditions around the world are being increasingly undermined. "Moreover," says Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ICFTU,

"the fact of whether or not workers' rights are recognised undoubtedly influences the protection of health and safety at work." In all too many countries, trade union rights are violated or nonexistent. As a result, the workers' health and safety are not protected properly

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.

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