

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU Online...

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Decent Work for All at the Heart of Global Governance

The ICFTU, with its Global Unions partners and the WCL, has today released a statement (http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/Ecosoc-final_2_.pdf) to a high-level meeting of the UN's Economic and Social Council taking place this week in Geneva. Entitled "Decent Work for All at the Heart of Global Governance", it calls for all the international institutions to make action to achieve decent work for all a priority.

ICFTU President Sharan Burrow, along with Marc Blondel, former General Secretary of the CGT FO-France, and Barbara Byers, Executive Vice President of the Canadian Labour Congress, will put the union case to the high-level meeting. The Statement stresses the need for employment, rights, protection and social dialogue to be taken up as basic components of decent work, which should guide all global economic and social policies, from development and welfare through to regulation of trade, investment and finance.

"1.4 billion people, half of the global labour force, are not earning enough to lift themselves and their families above the US\$2 per day poverty line. The need for full, productive and decent employment has never been greater", said Guy Ryder, ICFTU General Secretary. While there has been continuous strong global growth in recent years, employment prospects have been deteriorating, especially for women and young people, according to the union bodies. Better coordination of macro-economic policies is required, while global institutions must stop treating employment purely as a "trickle down" derivative and put creation of good jobs at the centre of policies and programmes.

The union organisations also point to the continuing incoherence in global policy-making, with national governments promoting one set of policies at the International Labour Organisation and other agencies, while supporting contradictory policies at the international financial institutions and the WTO.

"A coherent approach is badly lacking, to the detriment of workers and those seeking employment in countries around the world", said WCL General Secretary Willy Thys. "Governments need to get their act together, and be consistent in solving the global employment crisis", he added.

The poor prospects for most young people to find decent jobs features prominently in the Statement, which points to a 20% rise in global youth unemployment, to a total of 85 million, over the past decade. The high concentration of women in the lowest-paid and most exploitative jobs, and continuing feminisation of poverty happening across the world, is also addressed. Women's rights at work, childcare, maternity protection and a series of other measures are highlighted as points for action.

The unions will also use the Geneva event to call for a complete "u-turn" in World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies, and a stronger role for the ILO on the global stage. A key consequence of this would be formalisation of the work being done by tens of millions of informal and unprotected workers, which would mean a major step toward meeting the UN's Millennium Development Goals by giving those concerned the possibility to earn decent incomes and improve their working conditions.

The Statement appeals for the UN's Economic and Social Council to be given a key coordinating role to ensure global coherence, with the authority to guide other UN agencies and the WTO, IMF and World Bank.

"Decent work for all must become a global, universal goal throughout the international institutions..." says the Statement in conclusion.

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers in 241 affiliated organizations in 156 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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