

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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ICFTU Youth Solidarity mission put the spotlight on the situation of young workers in the EPZs

Brussels, 09 October 2006 (ICFTU Online): The second annual ICFTU Youth Solidarity Mission will take place in Honduras from 10 to 11 October. This event has been coordinated by the ICFTU Youth Committee with the help and assistance of ORIT (ICFTU Inter American Regional Organisation of Workers) and the national centres CUT and CTH.

The mission wants to put the spotlight on the situation of young workers in the export processing zones (EPZs), especially in Central America and Honduras itself, whilst calling for the strengthening of young workers' rights in those EPZs. The EPZs generally enjoy special incentives on tax and terms of employment of labour and their primary purpose is to generate export revenues in poor developing countries. Most present themselves as labour intensive manufacturing centres involved in the importing of raw materials or components and the exporting of factory products. In reality, however, workers' rights are often violated in these zones. Overall, 80 per cent of the workforce in EPZs is young women, most of whom are working in the textile, clothing, toy and electronics industries.

The "Unions for Women, Women for Unions" campaign will also be promoted during the mission. The campaign aims at a significant increase in female membership rates and stresses the need to strengthen women workers' rights, particularly those of women workers in the EPZs and the informal economy, of migrant women workers and of young women workers as a whole. Since the re-launching of the campaign, 54 national centres from 46 countries have been involved in it, including CUT and CTH Honduras.

The mission provides a great opportunity to meet the Vice-President of Honduras, the respective Ministers for Labour and Women (whose brief covers young people) and the maquiladoras' employers association. Trade unionists will raise their concerns about recent trends and developments in the EPZs in Central America with a particular focus on the persistent use of blacklisting by employers, i.e. firing workers who support the setting up of a trade union and putting their names up on a blacklist so they will not be able to find work again in the EPZs.

The mission will coincide with a two day youth meeting on 8 and 9 October in Honduras during which the CSACC (Central American Union Coordination Structure) will found its Youth Committee and a special session is planned on HIV/AIDS to discuss measures to stop the HIV/AIDS pandemic - Honduras has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Latin

America.

Youth solidarity blog: www.icftu.org/hondurasyouth

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

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