

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU On-line

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19th ICFTU Congress a historic milestone in strengthening the international trade union movement

Vienna, 30 October 2006: The 19th Congress of the ICFTU, to be held tomorrow in Vienna, will be its last. Following the dissolution of the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) tomorrow morning, the largest trade union international will hold its own Dissolution Congress. This will be followed on Wednesday, November 1, by the Founding Congress of the new trade union international: the International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC.

With its proud history of serving the world's workers for almost 57 years, the ICFTU will officially be dissolved on 31 October. Implementing the decision of the 2004 ICFTU Congress in Miyazaki that the organisation should take part in a process of strengthening the international union movement, the ICFTU will close down in order to join the new trade union international which will include the ICFTU's affiliated organisations, those of the WCL and eight other organisations with thus far no affiliation at international level.

Founded in 1949, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions currently has 241 affiliated organisations in 156 countries and territories across the five continents. Over 40% of its more than 150 million members are women. Throughout its history, the ICFTU has cooperated closely with the International Labour Organisation. In addition, it has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and contacts with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation. Its work focuses on respect and protection of trade union rights, the elimination of forced and child labour and the enforcement of international labour standards. Other key areas of its work include multinationals, gender issues, migration and sustainable development.

In order to tackle the new challenges presented by economic globalisation, the international trade union movement needs to reinforce and modernise itself. Dialogue between the two democratic international trade union organisations, once difficult, is finally leading to the creation of a new trade union international.

"The Dissolution Congress of the ICFTU is an important step in the process of strengthening the international trade union movement", stated Guy Ryder, the General Secretary of the ICFTU. He added that "trade union unity at international level is now essential to ensuring more effective representation of the rights and interests of workers in the global economy".

"It is with great pride that we say goodbye to an organisation that for the last 57 years has fought for the liberty and well-being of workers worldwide. In that time the world has changed many times over and in many different ways. The founding of the ITUC is an acknowledgement by trade unions of these changes, but the strong tradition of solidarity will continue," Ryder concluded.

The ICFTU represents over 150 million workers through its 241 affiliated organisations in 156 countries and territories. www.icftu.org The ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

For further information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +43 (0)664 593 6190.

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