

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Strength in unity: a new international trade union confederation is born

Vienna, 31 October 2006: Tomorrow will see the dawn of a new trade union international, a stronger and more united voice of workers' worldwide set to tackle the challenge of globalisation with renewed energy and hope.

As the culmination of a process that has inspired new hope in the face of huge challenges,, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) will be officially formed at tomorrow morning's opening session of its Founding Congress in Vienna. The Founding Congress of the ITUC, which will run until 3 November, was preceded today by the dissolution congresses of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions(ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL). The new ITUC will comprise the affiliated organisations of the former ICFTU and WCL together with eight other national trade union organisations that will for the first time affiliate to a global body.

The international trade union movement is adapting in order to remain a key player in an economic climate that is creating more losers than winners . The imbalances of economic globalisation are having a devastating effect, on millions of workers. Off-shoring, abuse of workers' rights and increasing poverty are all examples of the negative impact of these developments.

'The creation of the ITUC will solidify the trade union movement's capacity at the national and international levels', declared Guy Ryder, the former General Secretary of the ICFTU and prospective General Secretary of the ITUC. 'Stronger, we will exert more influence on companies, governments and the international financial and trade institutions. The founding of the ITUC is an integral part of the process of uniting the power of trade unionism,", he added.

Willy Thys, the former General Secretary of the WCL, said today: 'There is no doubt that the ITUC will become an effective countervailing force in a society that has changed enormously, with workers' rights being flouted under the pressure created by the current trajectory of " race to the bottom"globalisation'.

The Founding Congress, a historic event for the international union movement, will begin tomorrow morning with a formal opening ceremony. This will be followed by a plenary debate and an address by Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The programme for Thursday, 2 November, will include panel discussions

on the impact of globalisation, including "Cohesion and chaos - the global institutions" and "Global unions - global companies". Pascal Lamy, the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation, will address the congress in the morning via a satellite video link. The final day of the Congress, Friday 3 November, will focus on the adoption of the ITUC's programme and the establishment of regional structures. Those decisions will be followed by the election of the new organisation's General Secretary and General Council, with the council electing the remaining office bearers following the close of the Congress.

The ITUC represents 166 million workers through its 309 affiliated organisations within 156 countries and territories.

<http://www.icftu.org>.

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