

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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DECENT WORK FOR ALL: TRADE UNIONS WELCOME EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

Brussels, 1 December 2006 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC and The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) welcomed the adoption today by the Council of the European Union of a policy document on decent work, stating that these must be the basis for a consistent and comprehensive EU strategy to achieve the fulfilment of decent work both within the EU and worldwide.

"As a first step in promoting the decent work agenda worldwide, we need to set common employment standards across Europe, to stop companies setting workers in different countries in competition with one another," said John Monks, ETUC General Secretary, adding, "We can't talk about the decent work agenda in a vacuum. A case in point is the Volkswagen Forest plant in Belgium. We want specific action on this and have called for the European Globalisation Fund to be available in cases of restructuring within Europe. Further, we need a proper industrial policy for Europe."

"We strongly welcome the Council's support for globalising decent work throughout the multilateral system," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "The conclusions must be backed up by concrete action now, including the integration of respect of decent work into the WTO, IMF and World Bank. At the same time, the EU must ensure that its negotiating positions in trade negotiations do not undermine the situation of hundreds of thousands of workers in developing countries, who risk losing their jobs through intensified international competition with countries like China if they are forced to drop their tariff barriers by the WTO."

Monks added, "In its bilateral relations and Economic Partnership Agreements, the European Union must further insist on strong undertakings to respect workers' rights and to establish lasting structures for meaningful consultation with trade unions. Through its GSP, the EU must ensure that the beneficiary countries are genuine about respect for workers' rights, and be ready to withdraw those benefits from governments like Belarus that are not."

Founded on November 1 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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