

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Nepal: New Inter-Union Agreement Bolsters Chances for Democracy and Peace

Brussels, 4 December 2006 (ITUC OnLine): The signing of an agreement between the four main Nepalese trade union centres is a "major step on the road to lasting peace, full democracy and better lives for all in Nepal" according to ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. The joint Declaration of the ITUC-affiliated DECONT, GEFONT and NTUC with the ANFTU comes after the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Accord by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist leader Prachanda on 21 November.

The political Accord was heralded as marking an end to the decade-long internal conflict in the country, after massive and sustained civil protests brought an end to King Gyanendra's martial law and the promise of a fresh start for the war-plagued country. The conflict in Nepal is believed to have cost the lives of some 13,000 people since 1996. The end of direct rule by the King in April this year was followed by broad talks, including the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist, which laid the groundwork for the Accord.

The trade union Declaration stresses the need for constructive inter-union cooperation, union rights and social dialogue as essential to achieving decent employment, poverty reduction, gender equality and social protection. The four organisations have committed to formulate a common agenda based on fundamental principles and rights at work, and recognised the "responsibility, fundamental role and full commitment of trade union organisations to the restructuring of the state and peace building process".

"Nepal faces immediate and pressing political, social and economic challenges, and the fact that the major trade union centres have committed to a building a common agenda is critically important" said Ryder. "At the same time, government in Nepal must ensure that fundamental workers' rights are fully respected, and the international community needs to do all it can to support the evolution of democracy and the development of Nepal's economy", he added.

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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