

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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EU Commission conference paves the way to decent work

Brussels, 8 December 2006 (ITUC OnLine): Members of Decent Work Alliance today welcomed the outcomes of the “Promoting decent work for all in the world” conference, organized by the European Commission on 4-5 December.

Participants and speakers at the conference, ranging from Commissioners, representatives of member states, the International Labour Organization and employers to members of civil society and trade unions spent two days focusing on how the EU could mobilize its resources to promote decent work for its citizens and the rest of the world.

“We are in particular heartened by Trade Commissioner Mandelson’s remarks signaling that the EU was ready for a “step change” in its integration of decent work in bilateral agreements and its ongoing support for Core Labour Standards to be placed on the WTO negotiating table. We look forward to working with the Commission to ensure trade becomes a tool for sustainable development,” Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation said today.

“This was a watershed in intra-EU cooperation on the subject of decent work. For the first time all the players were in the room together and singing from the same song sheet – by the end of the two days no one was left in any doubt that the promotion of decent work in a globalised world is an urgent task, and the EU has a leading role to play,” commented John Monks, the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Congress.

The conference discussed numerous proposals for integrating the activities of the Commission’s Trade, Development and Employment branches in order to ensure that decent work was mainstreamed into all EU policies. It also turned its attention to the role the EU can play in pursuing policy coherence between international institutions.

“In its policy document on decent work issued last week, the Council of the European Union set the Commission the task of reporting back on the policy’s

implementation by mid- 2008. This two-day conference has presented a number of concrete and constructive suggestions for how this can be done, and we look forward to assessing our joint efforts by next year when the Commission organizes a follow up conference,” Conny Reuter, the Secretary General of Solidar commented.

“Decent work is a matter for European workers just as much as it is a matter for workers from developing countries. The fact that the EU recognizes the importance of an integrated approach, in which social partners and civil society are consulted and the ILO, as the expert institution in this field, takes the lead is an important step down the high-road of sustainable development and the strengthening of the European Social Model,” Ryder concluded.

Solidar and the ITUC are members of the Decent Work Alliance together with the Global Progressive Forum and Social Alert.

Founded on November 1 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates (www.ituc-csi.org). SOLIDAR is an independent international alliance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are involved in social service provision, international co-operation, humanitarian aid and life-long learning (www.solidar.org).

The ETUC represents 60 million workers across Europe.

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