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New ITUC report: Problems of fundamental workers' rights in the European Union

Brussels, 26 February 2007 (ITUC Online): A new ITUC report issued today on the European Union reveals serious shortcomings in respect for fundamental workers' rights in several EU member states. The document published today (Internationally recognized core labour standards in the European Union) coincides with the European Union's trade policy review at the WTO on 26-28 February 2007.

The ITUC report shows that while both the main ILO Conventions on trade union rights have been ratified by all member states, in particular in the new member countries violations of trade union rights take place, and labour legislation does not always conform to ILO Conventions. Shortcomings appear particularly with regard to anti-union discrimination and the right to strike.

"Furthermore, although all EU member states have ratified both ILO core Conventions on discrimination and equal remuneration, economic discrimination against women is still a reality in Europe" said Guy Ryder, ITUC General Secretary. "In all member states, we can see that a pay differential exists, unemployment rates are often higher among women, and women are disproportionately concentrated in part-time and lower paid service sector jobs. Measures to fight this discrimination must be taken without delay" he added. Discrimination has also occurred against ethnic minorities, including discrimination against the Roma minority cited in 10 of the 27 member states.

The ITUC report adds that even though most EU member states have ratified both ILO core conventions on child labour, illegal employment and exploitation of children occurs in many EU countries to some degree, mainly in informal activities and in agriculture. Forced labour is also still an issue to some degree in virtually all countries, in the form of trafficking of persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Furthermore in a number of countries prisoners are obliged to work for private enterprises.

EU external trade policy provides an important link to respect for Core Labour Standards with regard to freedom of association, discrimination, forced labour and child labour, through through the GSP trade arrangements of the EU.

Read the full report
http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/EU_TPR_CLS_Report_-_2007_final.pdf

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates.

Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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