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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Hong Kong: 36-day historical bar-bender strike ended on September 12 after settling a deal with contractors

Brussels, 14 September 2007 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC welcomed the end of the bar-bender strike on 12 September after settling a deal of HKD 860 for an 8-hour day. ³The wage increase is insignificant compared to the initial worker demand of HKD 950², declared Lee Cheuk Yan, General Secretary of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, ³but the workers agreed that 8-hour day was the most important issue and thus their representatives settled the deal with the employer association who also agreed to open negotiation again next March over the issue of wage increases² he added.

According to Lee Cheuk Yan, a meeting will be held this Sunday, February 16 with the bar-benders to discuss formation of a democratic trade union.

The Hong Kong workers have been on strike since 6 August over low pay and in favour of an 8-hour working day. This is the longest running strike in recent Hong Kong history. Despite the length of the strike the workers remained strong and garnered massive public support in a usually neutral Hong Kong. Most workers in the industry received a maximum of only 600 HK\$ per day, about half of the applicable pay rate of 10 years ago.

³Despite their refusal to work directly with the HKCTU, the Contractors in the end at least gave some ground to the worker's demands and ultimately accepted the strength of the demands and the considerable public support for the strike², declared Guy Ryder, ITUC General Secretary; the 8-hour working day is a significant victory for the workers. ³The formation of a new and democratic trade union for the bar-benders will be the next step in the fight for the workers¹ rights in Hong Kong².

The settlement is the first genuine industry wide collective agreement in Hong Kong.

The ITUC wrote directly (http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ITUC_letter_to_HKSAR_Government_re_Bar_Bending_Workers_-_24_August_2007.pdf) to the Hong Kong SAR Government on 24 August to urge them to support negotiations.

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: www.ituc-csi.org <file:///\\www.ituc-csi.org>

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