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Burma: EU falls short on sanctions

Brussels, 16 October 2007 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC and the European TUC have described the European Union's new sanctions policy on Burma, announced today, as a step in the right direction, but falling well short of what is needed to put the Burmese military junta under real pressure. The exclusion of oil and gas from the scope of the new sanctions means that the major source of foreign finance for the junta will remain basically intact. The previous EU bans have been extended to include a ban on European exports to Burma of equipment for the metal, timber, minerals and gemstone sectors, as well as import and investment prohibitions covering these sectors.

"These new restrictions are welcome, but they don't go far enough. The oil and gas sector is the single largest source of revenue for the military regime, and we are extremely disappointed that the EU has left this huge revenue stream untouched," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

With some 400 foreign companies having business links to Burma, European companies in the oil and gas sector have come under particular pressure to sever their links as part of the global campaign for all companies to disinvest. While those in the new sectors covered by the revised EU sanctions will need to sever their links, the international trade union movement will continue to press for comprehensive global sanctions covering all sectors.

"People in Europe might rightly wonder why the European Union, having rightly extended sanctions to some products, has failed to do so for others, especially given the importance of oil and gas income to the junta", said ETUC General Secretary John Monks.

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates.

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