

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Call to Action to collect citizens' demands for Decent Work, Decent Life

DECENT WORK, DECENT LIFE CAMPAIGN

Lisbon, 31 October, 2007 (ITUC Online): Half of the world's workforce earns less than 2 \$ a day. 12.3 million women and men work in slavery. 200 million children under the age of 15 work instead of going to school. 2.2 million people die due to work-related accidents and diseases every year. Add to this massive global unemployment, the lack of social protection for the majority of workers employed in the "informal economy", and the violation of trade union rights and the consequences of the lack of decent work are clear.

The urgency of ameliorating this situation will today be underlined by the launch of the Call to Action for Decent Work, which Decent Work, Decent Life* campaigners will use to call on governments and global leaders to implement the promises made in the July 2006 UN Ministerial declaration 'to create an environment at the national and international levels that is conducive to the attainment of full and productive employment and decent work for all'.[1] <#_ftn1>

In launching the Call in front of an audience of leaders from governments, trade unions and civil society from throughout the world, ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder will call on global institutions to re-orient their policies towards the achievement of decent work.

"Today, the global financial architecture is more fragile than ever – the lack of regulation in financial markets has led to global economic panic, a risk of downturn in the real economy, and thousands poised to lose their homes. Meanwhile private equity firms make billions from shady deals due to lax tax laws, but workers are left out in the cold. And the WTO talks have stalled, partly because people no longer believe that globalisation works to their benefit. Governments agreed to making decent work a goal, now those same governments must act to ensure that decent work is mainstreamed in global institutions," he commented.

"The achievement of decent work is crucial if we are to convince people that globalisation can work to their benefit. With the debate in Europe over the mini-treaty, with citizens in Europe feeling more and more that they are losing out, that their lives are less stable and with the retreat to nationalism that we see creeping up on us, now is the time to reassure them by establishing good quality jobs for workers in and out of Europe and a just trading system that shares the benefits of trade equally," said Josep Borrell, the head of the GPF and chair of the European Parliament's Development Committee.

Rabiatou Diallo, Member of Governing Body, ILO and General Secretary, Confédération Nationale de Travailleurs de Guinée (CNTG), who will also join the call emphasised the importance of providing protection for workers in the "informal economy", mostly women, who currently have no access to pensions, maternity cover or health care.

"We know that for a very small investment governments could extend social protection to all workers and that the benefits of this in terms of education, health and well being of the population are exponential. The next Financing for Development meeting of governments in Doha in 2008 must look to how these basic human rights can be extended to all," she said.

The call will be launched at 12.15 pm in the Auditorium VIII, AIP Centro de Congressos de Lisboa.

The Call to Action calls on governments to do the following:

1. Decent work: Reaffirm the contribution stable and quality jobs make to a healthy economy and just and equal communities by implementing inclusive strategies for full and productive employment, including for those currently working in the so-called informal economy who need rights and justice to defend their interests. All people have the right to work, to good working conditions and to sufficient income for their basic economic, social and family needs, a right that should be enforced by providing adequate living wages.

1. Rights: Workers' rights to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively with their employer are fundamental to realising decent work, and all international organisations, governments and businesses must live up to their responsibilities to respect workers' human rights.

1. Social protection: Strengthen and broaden social protection coverage by ensuring access to social security, pensions, unemployment benefits, maternity protection and quality health care to all. These benefits should be available to everyone, including workers in the so-called informal economy.

1. Trade: Change unfair trade rules and ensure that trade agreements are used as an instrument for decent work, sustainable development and empowerment of the world's workers, women, the unemployed and the poor. Binding mechanisms for the promotion and enforcement of decent work, including core labour standards, must be included in trade agreements. Governments must stop making trade deals which hurt the poor, create unemployment and lead to exploitation. The demands of workers' organisations and the rest of civil society must be listened to.

1. Debt: Ensure that the priorities of the international financial institutions incorporate social and environmental concerns. Particularly, loan and debt conditions which force countries to deregulate labour markets, reduce public spending and privatise public services at the cost of access and quality must be stopped. All projects funded by these institutions must adhere to core labour standards in their implementation.

1. Aid: Ensure that governments keep their commitment to increase the level of official development aid of rich countries to at least 0.7% of GDP. Adequate financing for development is imperative if the UN's Millennium Development Goals are to be reached.

1. Migration: Ensure that migrant workers are not exploited and enjoy the same rights as other workers by ratifying the relevant ILO Conventions and the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

The Call to Action will be publicised throughout the world and the signatures collected will be presented to decision-makers at key events. All people are urged to add their voice to the call for decent work by going to www.decentwork.org <<http://www.decentwork.org/>> .

[1] <#_ftnref1>
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G06/625/46/PDF/G0662546.pdf?OpenElement>

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*The Decent Work, Decent Life campaign is led by the International Trade Union Confederation, Solidar, the Global Progressive Forum, Social Alert International and the European Trade Union Confederation.

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The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> <<http://www.ituc-csi.org/>>

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