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Ukraine: 88 deaths from an explosion in the Zasiadko mine

Brussels, 20 November 2007 (ITUC): the ITUC was shocked to learn about the mining disaster in Ukraine on Sunday 18 November. According to the latest official estimates, 88 miners were killed and at least 12 more were missing. The catastrophe took place in the Zasiadko coalmine, in Donetsk, East Ukraine.

According to the authorities, around 80 corpses have already surfaced and the first burials have been organised. Thirty miners are still in hospital, including one man in a critical condition having suffered severe burns. The 29 others had been exposed to firedamp poisoning but their lives are not at risk.

It is not the first time that Ukraine has faced such a calamity. As recently as 2000, 80 miners lost their lives at the Barakov mine in the neighbouring region of Lougansk. Similar accidents had occurred earlier at the Zasiadko mine, and in other places, in both 1999 and 2001.

Given the increasing number of accidents in Ukrainian mines in recent years, the ITUC is not convinced by assurances that everything is being done to ensure the safety and health of the mineworkers. The ITUC wants an enquiry to be set up as quickly as possible, in consultation with the trade union organisations, to establish the circumstances behind the disaster.

"The ITUC shares the grief of the families mourning the miners killed in this disaster", stated Guy Ryder, the ITUC General Secretary. "Everything must be done to ensure that safety is ensured in the mines on a permanent basis", he added.

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates.

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