

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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068/210408

Trade Unions call on UNCTAD XII Conference to approve an UNCTAD agenda to realise decent work and development

Brussels, 21 April 2008 (ITUC Online): As trade ministers and Heads of State come together in Accra, Ghana to decide on the priorities for the UN's Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for the next four years, trade unionists are calling for the UNCTAD XII Conference to endorse a strong UNCTAD agency as the main forum where discussions on the interlinkage between trade and development take place.

"The development gains of trade depend largely on positive linkages between trade and employment, and on the capacity of trade to create decent jobs for people that currently are deprived from access to employment that provides a decent living", said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "UNCTAD should put full and productive employment and decent work at the heart of the trade and development discussion. Mainstreaming decent work in UNCTAD's work would be a logical follow-up to the UN's earlier commitments to prioritise decent work, and a first step towards providing essential policy coherence between UN agencies."

A trade union delegation will participate in the meetings and will be lobbying for the key issues that should be taken up in UNCTAD's future work programme, as summarised in the ITUC statement http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ITUC_comments_UNCTAD XII Conference text Accra 8 final_april-2.pdf

The ITUC Statement says that especially in a time where the benefits of trade and globalisation and the distribution of these benefits are being questioned, UNCTAD constitutes a crucial forum that needs to be strengthened. In particular the statement calls for a reinforcement of the analytical strength and the independent research capacity of UNCTAD.

The ITUC strongly supports the creation of an UNCTAD Commission on Globalisation, which could take up numerous vital issues related to globalisation and development. These include employment impact assessments of trade liberalisation; the problems created by Export Processing Zones with regard to competition on the basis of labour standards; the gender impacts of trade liberalisation; and the policies that need to be developed to address income inequalities.

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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