

>>> ITUC Press <press@ituc-csi.org> 29.04.2008 15:35 >>>
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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078/290408

ITUC May Day Manifesto 2008

Brussels, 29 April 2008 (ITUC OnLine): On this day, the 1st of May, millions of working people across the world join together to celebrate the achievements of more than a century of trade unionism. The high principles of equality, justice, human dignity and peace which have found expression through the trade union movement are just as relevant today as they were when working men and women first came together to fight for their rights at work. These principles gave rise to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ILO Convention 87 in 1948. But the fundamental rights enshrined in these celebrated instruments are far from reality for much of humanity.

For most of the world's people, decent work is but a distant dream. Millions of children are at work instead of school, workers are deprived of their fundamental rights and subject to exploitation by unscrupulous employers and repressive regimes, and inequality is growing within and between countries as a small minority accumulates incalculable wealth at the expense of others.

Not for many decades have the failings of global governance by "market solutions" been more apparent. Contagion continues to spread through world financial markets, with working women and men bearing the brunt of the unwillingness of governments to face up to the need for financial regulation. 100 million people more than last year do not have enough to eat as the global food crisis grows by day, threatening the very fabric of societies and fuelled by the legacy of decades of damaging policies at the world level. Action on climate change, perhaps the greatest test of human history, is feeble compared to the magnitude of the challenge. And the United Nations MDGs, goals which the global community set for itself, are far from being reached.

The means to deal with all these challenges exist, but the political will to resist the powerful interests that stand in the way of progress is lacking. Trade unions everywhere are confronting these interests, campaigning to put social concerns and sustainable development at the centre, rather than the margins, of policy. We demand a fundamental change to global governance, putting decent work at the core of a new globalisation and making the global institutions respond to the real needs of people instead of following the erroneous policies of the past.

On October 7 2008, the World Day for Decent Work, trade unions across the world will join together to issue a global call for rights at work. We will bring to the fore the great traditions of solidarity which have been the mainstay of trade unionism since its earliest days, and which are essential to solving the problems which confront the world today. We will show how decent work is central to ending poverty and ensuring equality for all men and women, and demonstrate our abiding commitment to solidarity with the marginalised and the dispossessed. We remain steadfast in our quest for a better world and renew our commitment to bring this about through united action of working people from every corner of the planet.

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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