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ITUC Welcomes European Commission's Recommitment to Decent Work

Brussels, 2 July 2008 (ITUC OnLine): the ITUC welcomed the European Commission's strategy report on "The EU contribution to the promotion of decent work in the world", released today to coincide with Commission President Barroso's launch of the EU's Renewed Social Agenda..

"Two years on from the Commission's original Communication on "Promoting Decent Work for All", the release today of the new document shows the Commission's continuing commitment to attaining decent work through various aspects of its policies - trade, development assistance, bilateral relations and so forth," commented ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

The ITUC particularly welcomes the Commission's support for core labour standards through its GSP system, in bilateral trade negotiations and at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). "The Commission must now convert its general support for decent work at the WTO into specific proposals for a WTO work programme on trade, decent work and development, together with the ILO", stated Ryder.

Other crucial areas of the report cover "green jobs" in the context of climate change; the integration of decent work into development assistance, a proposal also made by the ITUC in its statements at the United Nations this week; cooperative work to implement the new ILO Social Justice Declaration; the Commission's support for trade union advisory arrangements at the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank similar to those at the OECD; and the Commission's commitment to another progress report on its work on decent work by the year 2011.

One issue where trade union views differ from the Commission, however, concerns its support for Commissioner Peter Mandelson's 2006 "Global Europe" strategy paper, criticised strongly by both the ITUC and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) because it failed to reflect the Commission's "Decent Work" communication that had been issued just a few months previously. "A Global Europe-type approach to decent work is unacceptable," said Ryder. "It is essential that trade negotiations both at the WTO and in the EPA negotiations with ACP countries must not result in undermining decent work for the sake of gaining market access".

Trade unions also believe the Commission should issue a Recommendation calling for the ratification of ILO Conventions by the EU's own member states, in order to show the EU's commitment to international labour standards in its own actions and so deliver a stronger political message that globalisation requires the ratification and application of global

standards by all countries.

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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