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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

## ITUC OnLine

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### Israeli and Palestinian Trade Unions Reach Historic Agreement

Brussels, 6 August 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The Israeli national trade union centre Histadrut and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), both of which are affiliated to the ITUC, have reached a landmark agreement to protect the rights of Palestinian workers employed by Israeli employers, and to base future relations on negotiations, dialogue and joint initiatives to advance "fraternity and coexistence between the two peoples." The current agreement draws on the terms of an initial 1995 agreement, which it had not been possible to fully implement in the intervening years.

The key features of the agreement include the reimbursement by Histadrut to the PGFTU of the outstanding balance of union and legal representation fees paid since 1993 by Palestinians working for Israeli employers. The reimbursement is based on a detailed year-by-year analysis of the fees paid by Palestinian workers, taking into account funds previously transferred to the PGFTU. The PGFTU will have sole discretion as to how the funds will be spent, in line with its Constitution.

In the future, at least 50% of the representation fees paid by Palestinians working for Israeli employers will be transferred to the PGFTU, to enable both organizations to provide representation, legal and other trade union services to the workers.

Implementation of the agreement, which was negotiated under the umbrella of the ITUC, will be overseen by a joint committee of the two organizations.

"This agreement is tremendously significant, at a time when the political authorities in Israel and Palestine and the international community are failing to find just and lasting solutions to the political impasse. It means that the PGFTU will be able to ensure much more effective representation for Palestinian workers, while those working for Israeli employers will also benefit," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "The agreement calls upon the ITUC and its affiliates to continue to support future cooperation, and we are fully committed to do this," he added.

PGFTU General Secretary Shaher Sae'd said "This removes a key obstacle to future cooperation and the full respect of the rights of Palestinian Workers. Decent work is a foundation stone for political and economic justice, and we will now be in a position to devote even more attention to tackling the appalling state of the Palestinian economy and playing a fuller part in the quest for justice, fairness and democratic rights in the building of a Palestinian state."

"We are very pleased that this agreement has now been reached," said Histadrut Chairperson Ofer Eini. "Every worker, whether of Israeli, Palestinian or other origin, must have full rights to the protections offered by international labour standards. The outcome of our dialogue with the PGFTU can only help achieve this, and help lay the foundations for future cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian trade unions and progress in our shared quest for justice, peace and prosperity for all in the region," he added.

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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