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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

## ITUC OnLine

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### High level consultation between ASEM Labour Ministers and the Social Partners

Brussels, 14 October 2008 (ITUC OnLine): an unprecedented tripartite consultation between European and Asian social partners and Ministries of Labour took place yesterday in Bali, Indonesia as part of the ASEM Trade Union Summit, which brought together over 40 trade unionists from Europe and Asia.

Labour Ministers from the Netherlands, India, Slovakia and Cyprus, as well as vice ministers from China and Japan, took part in the consultation. The EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs who also attended strongly supported a process of dialogue with the social partners in ASEM. The employers' delegation joined the trade unions in calling for regular and formal meetings with the social partners.

ASEM is an informal platform created 12 years ago by European and Asian countries as a way to enhance dialogue and cooperation between the two regions. Today the 27 EU and 10 ASEAN countries as well as China, India, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Pakistan are members.

During the consultation European and Asian workers' and employers' organisations presented their views on the topics to be discussed today by the ASEM Labour Ministers, who are holding their second Ministerial Meeting in Bali. A key demand of the trade unions is to obtain a formal consultative status on the same basis as the Asia Europe Business Forum.

"We are delighted that after so many years, ASEM leaders have finally decided to add employment and social issues to their agenda," said Guy Ryder, ITUC General Secretary. "Unions are convinced that through social dialogue we have the capacity to change the direction of globalisation and make it work for workers. ASEM Leaders need to listen to social partners and take account of their views in dialogue and cooperation activities."

During the consultation workers highlighted the decent work deficits in several countries. Govindasamy Rajasekeran, the President of ITUC Asia - Pacific noted the increase of work precariousness in Asia. "A growing number of workers find themselves in very unstable employment relationships. We call them either irregular, temporary, atypical or contract workers, but the fact is that they all lack adequate social and legal protection," he said.

Workers have also argued strongly for a rights-based and gender sensitive approach to labour migration, an issue that the Ministers will

discuss today. "We reject the all security approach to migration and call upon labour ministers and social partners to get further involved in the management of migration flows", said Bianca Kuehl from the DGB, Germany.

Read the full TU Statement at

[http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/FINAL\\_statement\\_Bali\\_Oct\\_2008.8\\_Oct.final.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/FINAL_statement_Bali_Oct_2008.8_Oct.final.pdf)

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

<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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