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Global Migration Forum: Migrants Must Be Protected as Financial Crisis Hits

Brussels, 27 October 2008 (ITUC OnLine): "The search for a solution to the global financial crisis must ensure people's mobility, not restrict it," said ITUC President Sharon Burrow, conference chairperson of the civil society days of the Second Global Forum on Migration and Development (GMFD) at Monday's opening of the conference in Manila.

The ILO estimates that the present financial crisis is likely to lead the loss of some 20 million jobs world wide. The ILO added that "the number of working poor living on less than a dollar a day could rise by some 40 million - and those at two dollars a day by more than 100 million". Others say this is an underestimation.

Burrow also cautioned world leaders grappling to find solutions to the global financial crisis against restricting labor migration, a move adopted by governments during the Asian 1997 crisis.

"As with [the] previous crisis, migrant workers are likely to be the first to lose their jobs. This is true as sectors such as construction [are] being hit hard, a sector where migrant workers are numerous. During the Asian crisis in 1997, the first reaction of governments was to announce the expulsion of migrant workers to free up jobs for nationals," she said.

According to Burrow, the other urgent global problem with the financial crisis is the climate change. "To deal with both of these challenges will require new rules, new transparency, and new global architecture. The challenge is no less for the world leaders to ensure that the potential for the mobility of the world's people, a mobility that is born of choice and not desperation, a mobility that provides opportunities and not exploitation, is framed by a new architecture of protection," she said.

To read Sharon Burrow's full speech:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Manilla_Migration_CC_Forum.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>

For more information please contact the ITUC Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018.

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