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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

## ITUC OnLine

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### Burma: Historic Trade Union Congress Reaffirms Campaign for Democracy and Workers' Rights

Brussels, 24 March 2009 (ITUC OnLine): An historic three-day Congress of the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB) concluded on the Thai-Burma border today, with the adoption of the organisation's new Constitution, and the re-election of U Hla Oo as President and Maung Maung as General Secretary. The FTUB, which was founded in 1999, has been at the forefront of the struggle for democracy and human rights since its inception. The Constitution confirms the status of the FTUB as an independent, democratic trade union organization, committed to bringing about respect for labour rights, in particular the standards of the International Labour Organisation, for all Burmese workers.

Congress delegates expressed their thanks to the international trade union movement for the strong solidarity shown by trade unions across the globe in support of their Burmese colleagues, and pledged to strengthen cooperation with trade unions around the world.

A key feature of the Congress was the re-affirmation of the FTUB's commitment to an end to military rule and the introduction of democracy. The Congress called for a boycott of the military's sham "elections" in 2010, which are intended to bring a measure of credibility to the regime without it having to concede the absolute power that it currently holds. The Congress also pledged to carry on the fight against the systematic use of forced labour by the military, with evidence that the regime has been using forced labour on reconstruction projects following the devastating Cyclone Nargis of May 2008.

The FTUB also maintained its call for economic sanctions against the military junta, noting that 90% of the people of Burma have to live on less than 1US\$ per day, and that the only people gaining any real benefit from Burma's trade and economic relations with other countries are the small minority of the population who run the regime and their closest supporters.

"The FTUB comes out of this Congress strong, unified and determined to work for a better future for Burmese workers and the entire population of the country. The Federation clearly has extremely strong support within the country, despite the ongoing harassment and brutality of the regime towards anyone who they suspect of supporting genuine trade unionism. The ITUC and its international partners will continue and strengthen our support to the FTUB in its struggle for democracy, justice and workers' rights," said ITUC Deputy General Secretary Jaap Wienen, who represented the Confederation at the Congress.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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

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