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Core Labour Rights in Fiji: Positive Legal Developments Welcome but Democracy Still Not Re-established

Brussels, 25 March 2009 (ITUC OnLine): A new report by the world's largest trade union body, the ITUC, on core labour standards in Fiji has been issued today to coincide with the Trade Policy Review of that country at the WTO.

The report underlines the ratification by Fiji of the eight ILO fundamental conventions but notes that on several issues the government does not properly comply with the commitments it took.

Fiji has ratified both the ILO Conventions on trade union rights. However, according to the report, workers still face many obstacles when trying to organise and bargain collectively. In addition, freedom of speech has been restricted by the provisional government since the 2006 military coup.

The report further argues that the government's efforts to tackle gender discrimination in employment and remuneration need to be strengthened. "Important issues concerning respect for core ILO standards remain unresolved in Fiji, and until the unstable political environment due to successive coups in recent years is replaced by a genuine functioning democracy, it is unlikely that the necessary progress will be made," stated the ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

Another key conclusion of the report is the need to seriously fight income disparity between ethnic groups and to promote decent work, especially in rural areas, where indigenous Fijians are overrepresented.

With regard to child labour, the report notes the ratification of both ILO core Conventions by the government but draws attention to important shortcomings in the current legislation. Recent efforts to gather more information on child labour in the country are mentioned as a positive development.

Finally, the report does not find evidence of forced or compulsory labour but recommends that the government closely monitor the issue of trafficking in human beings.

Read the full report at:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/WTO_report_Fiji_final.pdf

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
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For more information please contact the ITUC Press Department on: +32 2

224 0204 or +32 476 621 018.

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