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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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28 April: World's Trade Unions Demand Action to End Workplace Carnage

Brussels, 28 April 2008 (ITUC OnLine): More than 14 million people are expected to take part in some 10,000 activities across the world today, the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers. Over 2.2 million workers die each year from work accidents and disease, and some 160 million more are injured or become ill.

According to the ILO, there is a clear trend in recent years toward increasing fatalities and injuries at work. More than 337 million accidents causing more than 4 days of absence from work were reported for the year 2003 alone, the most recent year for which global statistics are available. In the same year, 2.31 million people lost their lives to workplace diseases and the 358,000 fatal accidents which took place. The recorded number of deaths caused by hazardous substances almost doubled in comparison with 2001.

"Laws protecting workers' health and safety in many countries are weak or poorly enforced. Negligence by employers who fail to ensure their workplaces are safe and healthy is the main cause of the appalling toll of death and disease, and we fear that the global economic crisis will only make matters worse, as employers seek to cut costs even further. Prevention is the only answer, and that requires employers to invest in safe and sustainable work, and proper legislation and enforcement by governments. Trade union organisation provides a first line of protection for workers, and violation of these rights means more deaths and injuries," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

Trade union organisations, governments, employers, and many other institutions such as the ILO as well as a broad spectrum of professional and non-governmental organisations and even some employers are organising activities in countries around the world. The number and range of activities will exceed 2008 - itself a record - when hundreds of thousands of unions members and campaigners in over 120 countries were involved.

Many of the activities such as workshops, debates, rallies will focus on occupational accidents, cancers, chemicals and specific contaminants like asbestos and cadmium, along with a wide-range of unhealthy working conditions, from damaging noise levels to musculoskeletal disorders, the effects of stress and concerns about nanotechnology.

To join the facebook group on 28 April, please click here:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=170025585213&ref=nf>

Visit the joint ITUC/Global Unions/Hazards 28 April webpage:
<http://www.hazards.org/wmd/>

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries and territories.

<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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