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Solomon Islands Lags Behind On ILO Core Labour Standards

Brussels, 6 May 2009 (ITUC OnLine): A new report by the ITUC on core labour standards in Solomon Islands, which coincides with the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) review of its trade policy, notes that the government has not ratified seven out of eight ILO core labour standards Conventions.

As indicated in the report, workers' rights to organise and to bargain collectively are allowed by the law but are not always protected in practice. There are reports of violence against workers including physical beatings, particularly in the extracting industry. In the Gold Ridge Mining Company, miners went on strike in March 2009 claiming that they had been exposed to unsafe and dangerous work practices including cyanide handling and disposal without safety equipment. The report calls on the government to take effective measures to halt violence against workers and to actively promote collective bargaining instead.

The report draws special attention to the discrimination that women face. The majority of women are unemployed, and women are overrepresented in low paid and low skilled jobs. Furthermore, the fact that most women are illiterate reflects serious discrimination in access to education and training. The report concludes that the government has failed to address gender discrimination in any satisfactory way.

The law sets age limits and prohibits the employment of minors in certain occupations, but the law is inadequately enforced. The government needs to do more to reduce the numbers of working children. For example, education in the Solomon Islands is not compulsory and few resources are devoted to investigating child labour cases. The ILO has estimated that the number of working children between the ages of 10 and 14 is approximately 13,000 (6000 girls and 7000 boys), representing about 24% of this age group. The report concludes that child labour is a significant problem in the country including in its worst forms.

The report highlights the fact that under the current laws the exaction of forced labour is not punishable as an offence. Most forced labour cases are concentrated in the plantation sector.

Finally, the report calls the government of the Solomon Islands to ratify and implement fully all seven core ILO Conventions it has not yet ratified, in addition to other ILO Convention.

To see the full report:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/WTO_report_Solomon_final0509.pdf

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>

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