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Core Labour Standards in Zambia: Much remains to be done

Brussels, 27 July 2009 (ITUC OnLine) : A new ITUC report on core labour standards in Zambia finds major shortcomings in the application of the ILO Core Conventions in this country. The report has been prepared to coincide with Zambia's trade policy review at the WTO this week.

Zambia has ratified both ILO core conventions on trade unions' rights but the report shows that in practice those are widely flouted especially in the mining sector, which is dominated by foreign owners. Employers from this sector have a reputation for brutal attitudes and intimidation and the public authorities do not always intervene. Commenting on this situation ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder stated that: "The government must step up its efforts to ensure that workers' rights are respected in all companies including the foreign companies and sub-contractors."

According to the report women remain severely disadvantaged in employment and education despite the country's ratification of ILO Conventions against discrimination. The report found that in some sectors men are paid twice as much as women for work of equal value while labour market segregation remain very high with women being concentrating in low-skilled, low wage sectors. The report also highlights cases of discrimination against people infected by HIV/AIDS.

The report further emphasises that despite some efforts of the government and the ratification of ILO Conventions, child labour, including in its worst forms, remains a serious problem in Zambia, especially in the agriculture and domestic sectors.

Finally the report shows that forced labour exists in Zambia despite recent initiatives taken by the government to tackle this problem. Exploitation of workers, including migrants who are in particularly vulnerable situations, would require a much more pro-active approach of the public authorities and more labour inspection, says the report.

To read the full report: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Zambia.final.pdf>

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