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Leaders of Commonwealth Countries Called Upon to Act on Jobs, Climate and Poverty

Brussels, ITUC OnLine (21 October 2009): Trade unions from Commonwealth countries today released their statement to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which will take place in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 27 - 29 November. The submission <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ctug_chogm_statement_2009.pdf> from the Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG), whose combined membership is some 30 million workers, calls for specific action by Commonwealth member countries in eight main areas, focusing on the need for employment to be at the centre of economic recovery and reform, for a fair and ambitious outcome at the December Copenhagen Climate Summit and for a renewed effort to tackle global poverty.

The CTUG is calling on the governments to endorse the ILO Global Jobs Pact adopted at the International Labour Conference in June of this year, and to support measures to ensure that Economic Partnership Agreements and WTO agreements do not have negative economic and employment consequences, especially in developing countries. It is also asking the Commonwealth to establish an annual Commonwealth Labour Ministers Forum, organised on a tripartite basis, as well as to set a target for ratification of all eight core ILO Conventions by all Commonwealth countries by the year 2015.

On climate change, the CTUG is pushing Commonwealth countries to work for an agreement in Copenhagen which would limit the global temperature rise to no more than 2°C, stressing that this must be based on a "just transition" strategy which integrates decent work and which is supported by measures to ensure socially-responsible and green investment, low-carbon development strategies.

The Commonwealth trade unions are also looking to the CHOGM meeting to make real progress on tackling global poverty, with the current economic crisis expected to push 200 million more people into absolute poverty, wiping out modest gains which have been made in recent years. A biennial review of progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals for each Commonwealth developing country would be backed by binding timetables for the industrial country members to meet the UN's target for development aid, which would also be subjected to biennial review. Decent work should be at the centre of action to meet the MDGs, and the CHOGM is also called upon to support trade union initiatives to ensure respect for workers' rights, in particular in areas such as the informal economy and in export processing zones.

Amongst the other CTUG recommendations to the CHOGM is a demand that governments adopt and implement the ILO Code of Conduct on HIV/AIDS by 2015.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 158 countries and territories and

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