

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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World Women's Conference: Gender Equality, a Key to Tackling the Crisis

Brussels: 21 October 2009 (ITUC OnLine): The first ITUC World Women's Conference, "Decent Work, Decent Life for Women: Trade Unions Taking the Lead for Economic and Social Justice & Equality" ends today with a series of recommendations that aim to push gender equality up the international agenda.

Discussions at the Conference focused on the fact that although women have increasingly become part of the paid workforce and of trade unions, and there have been important achievements in trade union organising, collective bargaining, and other rights, women are "often in a disadvantaged position in comparison to men in labour markets around the world [and that] in most regions, the gender impact of the economic crisis in terms of unemployment rates is expected to be more detrimental for females than for males" as highlighted, in the ILO report on Global Employment Trends for Women 2009.

Conference delegates expressed deep concern that the commitment to advancing gender equality must not eroded by the global economic crisis. Strong support was given to the 2009 International Labour Conference resolution on gender equality which pointed out that "crises should not be used as excuses to create even greater inequalities nor undermine women's acquired rights".

The Conference highlighted priority issues for women at work and in society and politics, such as the rise of women in precarious work in recent years, which has left many women in short-term jobs with low pay, little or no protection from exploitation, and lacking social security and pension entitlements.

The Conference outcomes, which will be further refined by the ITUC Women's Committee early in 2010, underlined the vital importance of affirmative action measures and rigorous monitoring procedures to achieve gender equality. The particular challenges facing young women, and the need for trade unions to reach out to them, were discussed at a special session on the concluding day of the event. Compelling testimony given to the Conference describing the severe exploitation of women domestic workers around the world reinforced the commitment of the 450 participants taking part to press for domestic workers' rights, as part of a broad international campaign.

"The advantages of union membership for women workers as well as men are clear. The protection and support offered by unions is especially important in the current global economic crisis, when jobs and living standards for millions of workers are under severe threat," said Guy Ryder, ITUC general secretary.

The Conference also called on the ITUC to continue to progress the commitment to achieving gender parity in its programmes and structures, and to carry on its fight to give an equal voice and representation to millions of working women worldwide.

For more information, see the special page devoted to the World Women's Conference on the ITUC website <http://www.ituc-csi.org/womensconference?lang=en> (including photos of the conference and interviews with the delegates)

Also see the website of the "Decision for Life" project <http://dfl.wageindicator.org/home>

covering 14 developing and transition countries and eight occupational groups.

Photos of the Conference: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ituc/sets/72157622062720970/>

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 158 countries and territories and has 316 national affiliates.

Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <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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