

>>> "ITUC Press" <press@ituc-csi.org> 26.10.2009 9:35 >>>
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine

179/261009

Maldives: Trade Unions Absent From The Island Paradise

Brussels, 26 October 2009 (ITUC OnLine): A new ITUC report on core labour standards in the Republic of the Maldives reveals that despite becoming the 183rd member state of the ILO in May 2009, the island country has not so far ratified any of the eight core ILO labour Conventions. This report has been prepared to coincide with the Maldives' trade policy review at the WTO this week.

While the Maldives adopted a new Constitution and labour legislation in 2008, violent suppression of strikes has occurred, and so far no trade unions exist in the country. Commenting on this situation, ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder stated that "even though the multi-party democratic elections in 2008 were a promising step forward towards respect for the fundamental rights of workers, until trade unions are established and can bargain collectively the Maldives will not be living up to its international commitments to respect workers' basic human rights."

Among the report's findings is that serious discrimination continues to take place against women at the workplace. The government has yet to address issues of discrimination or to provide equal opportunities in employment. Many women have to leave their job once their first child is born because of the complete absence of child care facilities in the country.

The report also observes that child labour takes place, particularly in the fishing industry and in domestic work. The relatively large number of forced labour-type situations among migrant workers who make up 26 percent of the population, and female domestic workers in the Maldives, represents a serious problem.

The report emphasises that the priority for the Maldives must be to ratify and fully implement the eight ILO core conventions so that it brings its labour law and practice into line with basic international labour standards.

To read the full report:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Trade_Policy_Review_Maldives_final_october_09_.pdf

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