

>>> "ITUC Press" <press@ituc-csi.org> 17.12.2009 15:31 >>>
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC Online

219/171209

International Migration Day - a new report from the ITUC

Better protection for migrants' rights

Brussels, 17 December 2009 (ITUC Online): "In the current context of massive job losses, migrant workers, who are generally confined to the most precarious and least well-protected sectors, are the first to suffer as a result of the world economic crisis," according to Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC. Some countries have put in place policies designed to encourage unemployed immigrants to return home. These programmes generally have little effect, however, because the economic situation is also highly unfavourable in their home country: as a result, migrants prefer to stay. Once they have no work, they also find themselves without a residence permit, which further increases their vulnerability.

To mark International Migrants' Day on 18 December, the ITUC is highlighting the urgent necessity of providing more effective protection for migrants from the consequences of the economic crisis and putting decent work at the heart of strategies linking migration and development. At the 3rd Global Forum on Migration and Development held in Athens in November 2009, the international trade union movement stressed the urgency of tackling the issue of migration from the point of view of the rights of migrant workers. The ITUC has lent its support to the global campaign

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/launch-of-20th-anniversary-global.html?lang=en>

marking the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all migrant workers and members of their families in 1990.

In the eyes of the international trade union movement, the positive contributions made by migrant workers to the economies of their home and destination countries should be recognised, and in concrete terms this means that recognition should result in fairer treatment. In the context of the global trade union struggle for fairer globalisation with a more human face, linking migration and sustainable development is a fundamental priority for promoting decent work for all workers, migrants included.

Within the framework of the international protection mechanisms provided by the UN and in particular the ILO, migrants should be able to exercise in full their rights to freedom of association and trade union organisation, of which they are too often deprived. They should also be entitled to an adequate social welfare system and more ethical recruitment procedures.

For the ITUC, taking action to combat discrimination is a priority and must take full account of gender-related issues. Female migrant workers represent a significant and increasing proportion of the migrant labour

force and suffer particularly high levels of discrimination. They also represent the vast majority of trafficking victims of all kinds.

In December 2006, the ITUC launched a practical "action plan" within the trade union movement to organise migrants more effectively, protect and promote their rights and improve their working conditions, in particular by insisting on the framework of collective negotiations but also in partnership with NGOs and the other players in civil society concerned.

The ITUC has launched three partnership agreements with affiliate organisations in different regions as part of its efforts to strengthen South/South solidarity. Backed by LO-TCO Sweden, the three pilot projects are being run in Indonesia (SPSI) and Malaysia (MTUC), Senegal (CNTS) and Mauritania (CGTM), and Nicaragua (CST, CUS, and CUSa) and Costa Rica (CNTR). Information and support centres for migrant workers have been opened in Malaysia by the MTUC, in Mauritania by the CGTM and in Costa Rica by the CTRN. Other affiliate organisations are launching similar initiatives, for example the CGT in Colombia.

Long-established projects and mobilisation campaigns in many trade unions, particularly in Europe and North America, aim to ensure the full integration of migrant workers and their families. To illustrate the efforts of the trade union movement in this area, the ITUC is publishing a new report http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_migrant_EN.pdf which highlights the encouraging results of the trade union cooperation project being run in Mauritania and Senegal to support migrant workers.

Protection for migrant workers will be one of the main themes at the next ITUC Congress, which will be held in Vancouver (Canada) from 21 to 25 June 2010. Meanwhile, the international trade union movement, along with many national affiliate organisations in different parts of the world, will be campaigning vigorously for the ILO to adopt a new international convention specifically covering the rights of domestic workers.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 155 affiliate organisations in 311 countries and territories. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

For further information, please contact the ITUC Press Office on: +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 62 10 18.

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