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G20 Labour Ministers give an important message on Jobs - but will government action to raise global employment follow?

Brussels, 22 April 2010 (ITUC OnLine): While the recommendations to the G20 Leaders issued by the G20 Labour Ministers from their meeting this week in Washington DC recognise the need to put jobs and social protection at the centre of economic recovery, trade unions are concerned that with pressures rising to cut back on recovery programmes and reduce public deficits, premature “exit strategies” could tip the global economy back into a recession with catastrophic results, according to an ITUC/TUAC evaluation <http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-tuac-evaluation-of-the-labour.html> of the meeting’s outcomes.

“The Labour Ministers have done important groundwork this week to tackle the huge impacts of the global economic crisis on employment but this must now be followed through by action to support global demand and employment over the months ahead. We must halt the continuing rise in unemployment and create new jobs. Furthermore there needs to be an ongoing role for labour ministers within the G20 in order to address the employment impact of the crisis with effective measures to help all workers, including the most vulnerable,” said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

The Ministers’ statement importantly recommends that governments strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining, build up social protection systems, put in place targeted job creation for vulnerable groups, implement the ILO Global Jobs Pact and ensure an ongoing role of the ILO within the G20 global framework. They also lay out the elements of a skills and training strategy to be presented to the G20 leaders in Toronto in June.

“The emphasis on quality of jobs and collective bargaining is new and welcome. Increasing economic inequality over two decades helped cause this crisis. Fairer income distribution and restoring real purchasing power to working people is essential for sustainable economic growth in the future,” said John Evans, General Secretary of the OECD-TUAC, adding “G20 Leaders need to establish a G20 task force including trade unions, to prepare for a second G20 Employment Ministerial before the end of the year and to ensure action on the skills and training strategy.”

The economic stimulus mobilised by governments is judged by the ILO to have saved or created some 21 million jobs so far. Even with this, global unemployment has already risen by 34 million since the start of the crisis, and any shift to short term deficit reduction by governments would lead to millions more lost jobs and could in all likelihood tip the world into a second, deeper, recession.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 312 national affiliates.

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