

NEWS

Unions of the world unite for Peace, Security and Democracy

25 June 2010: ITUC World Congress delegates today adopted a resolution that reconfirms the ITUC's commitment to achieving a peaceful, democratic, secure and stable world, where people from all countries coexist in mutual respect and tolerance, free from the threat of armed conflict, terrorism or other forms of violence or occupation.

ITUC president Sharan Burrow announced that the ITUC will undertake a mission to the Middle East to urge that the peace process continues there. She emphasised the urgent need to address “the illegal occupation of the West Bank, and the need to end the blockade of Gaza that deprives people of their fundamental needs and entitlements.”

ITUC affiliates from Turkey and Greece took the stage together with the resounding cry “long live peace!” They presented a joint initiative for “cooperation and solidarity for a dividend of peace for workers” founded on the belief that “working people have nothing that divides us across the two shores of Aegean Sea.”

These delegates noted that despite this time of economic crisis, military expenditure has been rising steadily around the world. Greece and Turkey respectively have the highest percentage of military spending to GDP after the USA, among NATO countries. They called upon their governments to reduce military spending to achieve a real peace dividend by reallocating military expenditure savings to promote new jobs, education, health and social care.

In an historic demonstration of peaceful goodwill and solidarity, the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW), in consultation with the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU), and with mediation assistance by ITUC Africa General Secretary Kwasi Adu-Amankwah – put forward a joint statement calling for the lifting of sanctions against Eritrea, and renewed action on implementing UN Security Council Resolutions to resolve the conflict between the two countries.

JOINT POSITION PRESENTED TO THE 2ND ITUC WORLD CONGRESS BY THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF ERITREAN WORKERS (NCEW) IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CONFEDERATION OF ETHIOPIAN TRADE UNIONS (CETU)

We call for the lifting of sanctions against Eritrea.

We support renewed action for resolving the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia through implementing UN Security Council Resolutions.

As Congress meets, armed conflicts of varying intensity affecting people in more than 20 countries worldwide are taking place. All too frequently, this is exploited by those who supply weapons to or otherwise seek to profit from countries in situations of conflict. Global military spending has increased 45 percent in real terms in the past 10 years to record levels, with some countries allocating as much as 10 percent of their GDP to it, at the expense of vital investment in social and economic development. There are more than 23,000 nuclear warheads in the world – sufficient to destroy life on the planet many times over.

The ITUC recently collected and submitted to the United Nations 6.7 million signatures from working people around the world who are united in the call for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

At this congress session, the Japanese ITUC affiliate JTUC-Rengo handed over the golden Dove of Peace to be held in trust by the Canadian Labour Congress until the next ITUC World Congress.

Naomi Okamoto of JTUC-Rengo Japan said, “I hope that every one of our brothers and sisters will soon be able to live in peace. This dove flies from union to union carrying with it the hope of peace. This dove is even more valuable than pure gold. As far as peace is concerned, it is the precondition to achieve our trade union goals.”

Social justice, democracy, good governance and the rule of law, including international law, are foundations for peace. Still there’s an appalling toll of death, injury and disease across the world as results from armed conflicts. It is often the most vulnerable who are the principal victims, with systematic rape and other forms of violence against women and girls used as a weapon of war. Hundreds of thousands of children are forced into combat and military slavery in conflicts around the globe.

Conflicts often have their roots in economic and social deprivation. Devoting additional resources including development assistance to generating decent work opportunities, particularly for young people, is an essential element in addressing the causes of social instability and conflict. Trade unions have a unique capacity to work for peace and for preventing the development of conflict and dealing with its aftermath.