

Investing in quality public services – the best alternative to austerity cuts

(Geneva, Switzerland), 15 October 2010 (ITUC OnLine): In the face of widespread cuts to public services, leaders of private and public sector trade unions, municipal governments and civil society groups have made the unprecedented joint commitment to work together to promote investment in quality public services backed by fair taxation policies as the key solution to the economic crisis, and the best way to build peaceful, equitable, democratic and ecologically-sustainable societies.

It's "our turn, our future" concluded participants in the international Quality Public Services—Action Now! conference in Geneva, Switzerland this week. The Council of Global Unions, sponsor of the three day conference attended by 400 delegates, announced the launch of a major global campaign guided by a charter and action plan that links local, national and international efforts to promote quality public services. The CGU collectively represents more than 176 million working men and women.

CGU chair Aidan White said, "This is a call to the trade union movement to advance its historic responsibility to work in broad social coalitions and act as a force for social change that improves the quality of life for all citizens. We don't have time to lose."

Kumi Naidoo, executive director of Greenpeace International and council member of Global Call to Action Against Poverty, called for "a new activism" to back demands for quality public services as the foundation for social justice policies.

"History teaches us that when decent people take risks and engage in struggle peacefully, principally and courageously, pursuing civil disobedience where necessary, then those who occupy the instruments of power, whether in government or in the financial sector, will listen and respond," he said.

Susan Hopgood, president of Education International, said, "We are conveying a powerful message in uniting as advocates for strong schools, decent health services and social services, clean water and proper sanitation, effective fire and security services, affordable housing and utilities, accessible communications and transport, public media and culture, and good public administration and municipal services. Quality public services provide the foundation for sustainable growth, equitable redistribution of wealth, and the means for justice, good governance, and the exercise of democracy."

David Cockroft, general secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, said the new campaign would start in selected cities as "a rallying point for the industrial and political power of the global union movement" and was needed "because public services benefit both private and public sector workers, our families and our communities."

Peter Waldorff, general secretary of Public Services International, said the campaign will show that as governments break collective agreements with impunity while cutting public services and benefits, unions and allies are applying new strategies that will build a more sustainable world and ensure social protection for all. "It's time for action now!"

See Quality Public Services—Action Now! conference speeches and summaries at:
www.qpsconference.org Council of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org/>

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 301 national affiliates. <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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