

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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G20: Seoul Summit Must Tackle Rocketing Unemployment and Poverty, say World Union Leaders

Brussels/Paris, 4 November 2010 (ITUC OnLine, with TUAC): The Seoul G20 Summit needs to take decisive action to tackle the continuing global employment crisis and escalating poverty levels, according to the international trade union movement. More than 220 million people are currently unemployed according to official figures – the highest level ever recorded. Around 15% of the total unemployed lost their jobs since 2007. Along with this, some 100 million people have been pushed into absolute poverty by the crisis.

“After a promising start by the G20 on employment and financial regulation, progress stalled at the last summit in Toronto. Governments need to repair the damage when they meet in Seoul. Coordinated action to generate decent jobs must be supported by effective regulation of banking and finance, including the introduction of a Financial Transactions Tax to take the burden of recovery off the shoulders of workers and make the banks, who caused the crisis, pay their fair share,” said ITUC general secretary Sharan Burrow, who will lead a 50-strong international delegation of top-level union officials to meet with G20 leaders in Seoul.

In their Global Unions Statement <http://www.ituc-csi.org/global-unions-statement-to-the-g20.html> to the summit, the unions set out a five-point agenda for global recovery and reform, based on:

- Implementing recovery measures that focus on job creation, so that public deficits can be reduced through economic growth instead of spending cuts;
- Putting quality employment and social protection at the heart of the G20 Framework for Growth;
- Ensuring that green employment and “just transition” are at the core of action to arrest climate change;
- Meeting development aid commitments, with creation of decent jobs in the recipient countries as a central objective; and,
- Accelerating financial reforms, including fair taxation, a Financial Transactions Tax and a clamp-down on tax havens.

A key union demand on the G20 involves the creation of a Working Group on Employment, involving government, employer and trade union representatives. This would help ensure that employment, education and training issues would be given the necessary profile in the G20’s work in future.

The latest forecasts from the OECD show that the recovery has slowed in the wake of the shift to fiscal consolidation and that unemployment rates are expected to remain high at between 8 - 8.5 per cent in 2010 and just over 8 per cent in 2011. “The return to high levels of long term unemployment must not be the legacy of this crisis,” said John Evans, general secretary of the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD, TUAC. “G20 leaders must re-prioritise and deliver a recovery in jobs in the short-term, meet their commitments on financial regulation

and place fairness and sustainability at the heart of the G20 Framework for Strong Sustainable and Balanced Growth.”

“We are putting forward realistic and balanced proposals to the G20, and the central thrust of our message about creating decent jobs is supported by several governments and even the International Monetary Fund. We are calling on the G20 leaders to demonstrate courage, determination and the political will necessary to lift the global economy out of recession and make the fundamental changes that are required to build a global economy which works for people,” said Burrow.

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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