

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Haiti: Trade Union Brigades Fighting the Cholera Epidemic

Brussels, 18 November 2010 (ITUC OnLine): Haiti's cholera epidemic, a tragic consequence of the series of disasters to have struck the country, has killed over 1000 people in seven regions. The trade unions have responded by launching an awareness campaign to stem the epidemic.

For several months, ten Haitian trade union organisations from all provinces have been working together to help put their country back on its feet. They are determined to remain relentlessly active, and have set up rapid response teams, the "workers against cholera brigades". After training with the cooperation of the Health Ministry, 50 trade unionists from different sectors of activity will spread out across the country and with the help of their affiliates in the different regions will supply treatment kits and teach workers about the disease. The brigades will be in constant contact with the emergency unit set up by the Haitian trade unions to track the progress of the disease and to make recommendations to the government's coordinating committee.

The ITUC has opened an office in Haiti so that it can be there side by side every day with the country's trade unions. "Everything possible must be done to rebuild the country, fight the epidemic and create decent jobs," urged the ITUC's General Secretary, Sharan Burrow. "We have seen nothing so far in terms of public policy on employment, education, health, or housing. It is appalling that only a fraction of the aid promised by the international community has been made available. Despite the active presence of a representative of the trade union movement on the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission, employment issues are still the poor relation of the priorities for action.

The ITUC urgently appeals to the United Nations, particularly the ILO, to implement the Decent Work Agenda, one of the pillars of development, as quickly as possible, through ambitious programmes designed in consultation with the social partners."

The General Secretary of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas, TUCA, Victor Baez, also announced this week that in January 2011, one year after the earthquake, the ITUC and TUCA will organise another international trade union conference on Haiti, to be held in Port-au-Prince. "It will be an opportunity to evaluate the April 2010 trade union road map. But above all it will give a stronger voice to the numerous appeals by the Haitian trade unions for the right to develop, live and work in dignity," he explained.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 301 national affiliates. See the website <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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