

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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World AIDS Day: A Focus for Action in the Workplace

Brussels, 30 November 2010 (ITUC Online): Trade unions around the world will be using tomorrow, World AIDS Day, as a focus to promote action on HIV and AIDS in the workplace and to call for renewed international commitment to tackle the pandemic, which is responsible for some 5,000 deaths every day. Unions will highlight this year's theme, Universal Access and Human Rights, to build awareness of the social nature of the disease, since HIV transmission mainly takes place along the fault lines caused by poverty, gender inequality and social injustice.

The union movement is intensifying its push for national implementation of the new ILO Recommendation 200 on HIV and AIDS and the World of Work. This landmark ILO instrument breaks new ground by providing a framework for HIV and AIDS to be dealt with as a workplace issue, and by reinforcing the human rights consequences of the pandemic. While funding for HIV and AIDS has been hit by the global recession, we need to remember that AIDS itself is not in recession. It continues to reap a deadly toll: for every two new people who get treatment, five more are infected. "Governments have committed to reverse the spread of this disease by 2015, and action in the workplace and union work in the broader social context is critically important to achieving this aim," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC and its Global Unions partners are calling for full recognition of the human rights dimension of HIV and AIDS, and the key role of non-discrimination legislation both in reducing infection rates and ensuring fairness and equality for all those affected. The main points on which unions are demanding action are:

- Legislative frameworks which prevent HIV-related discrimination in recruitment and employment;
- Creation of income opportunities for HIV-affected workers and their families, including for migrant workers and those in informal and unprotected work;
- Provision of social protection without discrimination on the basis of real or perceived HIV status;
- Confidentiality, privacy and freedom from mandatory workplace HIV testing, including further action on data protection in relation to employment;
- Linkage of action to implement ILO Recommendation 200 to respect for other ILO standards, in particular those relating to freedom of association and collective bargaining and discrimination;
- Strengthening of labour inspection and administration; and
- Emphasising the regional and national dimensions of action to combat HIV and AIDS.

"Medical science alone will never be enough to stop this pandemic. The social dimension is just as important, but still not enough is being done to utilise the expertise and reach of trade

unions at work and in the community. The new ILO instrument should provide the impetus required both for workplace action and broader recognition of the human rights aspects,"" said Burrow.

To see Message from Sharan Burrow about the outcomes of the ILO/ITUC writing contest for Latin America "Positive Workers Write!": <http://www.ituc-csi.org/world-aids-day-2010-message-from.html>

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>

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