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EU-India Summit: Unions Demand Attention to Impact on Workers

Brussels, 10 December 2010 (ITUC OnLine): As the EU-India Summit meets in Brussels on 10 December, trade unions have reiterated their views on a draft free trade agreement.

“As we have said since talks started in 2007, any agreement must contain a comprehensive and effective chapter on sustainable development entailing the commitment of both parties to the attainment of decent work, including respect for fundamental workers’ rights,” insisted ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

“A social chapter is essential so that an agreement could lead to growth, development and the creation of decent and productive employment,” stated ETUC General Secretary John Monks. “And trade unions must have rights and mechanisms to be able to raise issues under the procedures of the agreement.”

“The impact on the textiles sector stands to be particularly great unless effective measures to protect workers’ rights,” said ITGLWF General Secretary Patrick Itschert. “Our Indian and European affiliates are united in insisting on a strong social chapter.”

Trade unions are also concerned at proposals to include provisions on the temporary cross-border movement of workers in the agreement – unions have always stated that trade agreements should not contain provisions to regulate migration. Should any such articles nonetheless be included, these must provide for full respect for national labour law and existing collective agreements in order to ensure that migrant workers receive employment conditions no less favourable than those of nationals.

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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