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International Women's Day: New Report Shows Second Wave of Global Crisis Hurting Women

Brussels, 7 March 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Women are facing higher unemployment, underemployment and reduced working hours as a second wave of the global economic crisis impacts female employment, reveals a new report issued by the ITUC today, International Women's Day. The report, "Living With Economic Insecurity: Women in Precarious Work" <http://www.ituc-csi.org/living-with-economic-insecurity.html> shows that while the initial impact of the crisis was equally detrimental to men and women, increasing numbers of women are now either losing their jobs or being forced into more precarious, temporary, and informal forms of work. Globally the official unemployment rate for women of 7% masks a harsher reality, with a massive increase in the numbers of "working poor", those, mainly women, whose jobs do not provide enough to meet basic needs. Overall, the ranks of working poor swelled by more than 100 million people due to the crisis, with around 1.51bn people, half the world's workforce, now in vulnerable employment.

"This report, drawn from a broad set of global and national indicators, shows how the crisis is far from over, especially for women. Much of this impact is hidden, due to deficiencies in employment statistics. Much of it is also a direct result of women still being treated as second-class citizens at work. Too many women are denied the right to join unions and bargain collectively for better job security, wages and conditions, such as domestic workers or those working in export processing zones (EPZ). Cuts in public expenditure made with no consideration of their gender impact are having the biggest impact on women, both through higher unemployment and reduction in crucial services such as child care," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

Burrow will present the report at the inaugural meeting of the ITUC Arab-country women's network in Tunis this week.

The report sets out four main areas of action needed to overcome the second-wave impact of the crisis on women in particular:

- Shifting the policy focus to creating decent, quality jobs to get women out of precarious and informal work;
- Implementing gender equality measures in government policy and especially in the labour market;
- Introducing a social protection floor for workers in every country, with the proven beneficial effect on poverty reduction; and
- Action by trade unions to reach out to women workers in unsecure forms of work

"Our demands for government action are supported by trade union action to organise women workers, particularly younger women who face particular discrimination in the world of work," said Burrow.

One such example is the "Decisions for Life" campaign, which has organised tens of thousands of young women workers in 14 countries to date. A video promoting this campaign has also been released by the ITUC today <http://www.ituc-csi.org/decisions-for-life-helping-young.html?lang=en>

Action by governments must also be accompanied by responsible employment practices in business, and multinational companies should be leading the way in this, instead of promoting or permitting violations of workers' rights in their global operations. In one case study in the new report, a woman employed by T-Mobile USA, a fully owned subsidiary of German giant Deutsche Telekom, describes how the company's union-busting activities impact on her life at work and at home, a pattern repeated across T-Mobile USA's workforce of nearly 40,000.

"Government have their responsibilities, and employers do too. Big multinationals such as Deutsche Telekom, which respects union rights at home in Germany but not in its US subsidiary, should provide decent and secure jobs where the rights of all their employees are properly respected. We expect better from them," said Burrow.

For more information on the Decisions for Life Campaign: see
<http://www.ituc-csi.org/+-decisions-for-life-+.html?lang=en>

For more information on Deutsche Telekom's T-Mobile USA; see
<http://www.facebook.com/loweringthebar>

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 301 affiliated national organisations from 151 countries and territories. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and
<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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