

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine

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"Winds of change for social justice and democracy 1 May 2011"

"Brussels, 1 May 2011 - common statement of the ITUC and its Global Unions partners".

Brussels, 29 April 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Today as trade unionists around the world celebrate the role of workers in the fight for democracy and social justice, the international union movement takes inspiration from winds of change sweeping across Arab countries.

ITUC salutes the courage of working men and women and the independent trade unions in the vanguard of this historic fight for freedom.

We pledge our support to their struggle and we condemn without reservation the tyranny of regimes, in the Middle East and elsewhere, who continue to deny their people fundamental rights and who use violence to silence voices of dissent. We urge the international community to act to end this oppression.

At the same time, in the name of hundreds of millions of working people who yearn for an end to inequality, discrimination and exploitation, ITUC reaffirms their demand for a full-scale transformation of the world economy.

We seek an end to the culture of political and corporate neglect that has created a gulf between rich and poor and we call for new commitments to respect workers' rights, to create the framework for social justice and to combat the scourge of unemployment.

The time has come to turn away from the failed policies of the past. We must abandon programmes of austerity that tear into the fabric of society and that diminish people's lives.

We must end the scandal of falling living standards caused by the growth of informal, unprotected and precarious work and, particularly, the grotesque exploitation of migrant workers. There must be action now to rescue a lost generation of young people who yearn for jobs and a decent future.

But none of this will happen unless governments put their people first by regulating the finance sector and by curbing the excesses of corporate power.

All governments must invest in job creation, in education and training, in programmes to strengthen investment in quality public services and in providing a universal social protection floor. The largest and most powerful economies, in the G20, must provide the lead for this.

Governments must put finance at the service of the real economy and reclaim the wealth needed to put the world economy to rights by taxing banks and finance, including urgent action to introduce a financial transactions tax.

States must confront corporations who profit from scandalous exploitation of vulnerable workers and who fail to respect union rights and global labour standards.

Unless there is an immediate change of direction in governance and management of the world economy, the noble aspirations of the Millennium Development Goals will not be met and there will be no progress to stop the catastrophe of climate change.

Globalisation can only work if it brings sustainable wealth for all and promotes action for a just transition to a sustainable world built around principles of strong economies, social justice, and green jobs.

ITUC will work to expose governments who refuse to change and who are withdrawing from provision of services, imposing fiscal cuts and attacking public sector workers with devastating effect on the lives of all people, particularly women.

We will continue to isolate, condemn and target those companies that are reckless in their disregard for labour standards and who prey upon the weakest in the workforce.

Finally, ITUC in the Middle East and elsewhere will continually strive for peace in the face of dictatorship and corruption. Exploitation and political instability caused by an absence of the rule of law and democracy and economic injustice means that war and social conflict is a constant risk.

Today the global challenges are as great as we have ever faced, but the union movement is in good heart. Our proud traditions of solidarity are the foundations of social progress, democracy and peace, and they give us the strength to make real the dream of a global economy based upon justice, equality, humanity and sustainability.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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