

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

ITUC OnLine
129/240611

US\$ 8 Billion More Needed to Fight HIV-AIDS, Unions Call for More Workplace Action

Brussels, 24 June 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Trade unions are telling a key meeting of the United Nations body UNAIDS this week that, along with real commitments from governments to fill the US\$ 8 billion funding gap, the potential impact of workplace-based activities in tackling the HIV and AIDS pandemic is still not being realised.

"Trade unions and employers are united in their determination to support action to stop the AIDS pandemic spreading, yet the full potential of workplace-based prevention and education is still not being realised. The United Nations has again confirmed the crucial role of the world of work, and we need governments and funding agencies to give workplace action the necessary support," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

A UN "High Level Meeting" in New York at the beginning of June committed to "mitigate the impact of the epidemic on workers, their families, their dependents, workplaces and economies, including by taking into account all relevant ILO conventions, as well as the guidance provided by the relevant ILO recommendations, including ILO Recommendation No 200, and call on employers, trade and labour unions, employees and volunteers to eliminate stigma and discrimination, protect human rights and facilitate access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support".

Unions are calling for the UNAIDS Programme Coordination Board meeting in Geneva to add its weight to the UN call and ensure that work-related activities are a full part of the overall response to HIV-AIDS. A six-point action plan, the basis for HIV-AIDS action by the ITUC and its Global Unions partners, stresses:

- * reduction of stigma and discrimination on the basis of real or perceived HIV status in recruitment, employment and occupation - as a part of the "getting to zero discrimination" strategy;
- * increased access to prevention services through workplace HIV service delivery, including workplace peer education - as a part of the "getting to zero new infections" strategy;
- * supporting countries in responding to HIV/AIDS within broader plans and actions related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty reduction strategies and development, including scaling up of national workplace HIV policies as outlined in the ILO HIV and AIDS Recommendation No. 200;
- * scaling up social protection strategies and access to treatment, care and support through workplace HIV/AIDS service delivery, including access to mother to child transmission (MTCT) treatment - as part of the "getting to zero new AIDS-related deaths" strategy;
- * continuous HIV reviews by the UN and ensuring that HIV and human rights issues retain priority in the broader health context, including the development and ratification of a set of human rights indicators for national monitoring, accountability and budgeting.

"More than 34 million people are living with HIV. We are a long way from eliminating the pandemic, or indeed meeting other global health challenges. Unions are already doing much on HIV-AIDS, in the workplace and in society, and more backing from governments would mean an even greater impact from this work," said Burrow.

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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