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New Report Reveals Labour Law Shortcomings in Europe

Brussels, 6 July 2011 (ITUC OnLine): A new report released by the ITUC today reveals shortcomings in labour laws in EU member states, including insufficient protection from anti-union discrimination and unreasonable restrictions on the right to strike. The report, submitted to the WTO trade policy review of the 27 EU member states this week, also criticises European Court of Justice rulings which have eroded fundamental workers' rights, and cites persistent discrimination against women at work.

"EU countries need to correct deficiencies in labour legislation to allow working people to fully exercise their rights under international law. Erosion of these rights leaves workers without proper protection, and holds down incomes at a time when Europe desperately needs economic demand to pick up," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

While the report emphasises that core labour standards are generally respected in law and practice, it makes key criticisms in the following areas:

- Rulings made by the European Court of Justice, which have been criticised by the ILO and dramatically undermine workers' rights including the right to strike;
- Despite equality legislation, discrimination against women in the labour market continues. This includes a high concentration of women in low-paid jobs, a persistent gender pay gap, and lack of opportunities for women in senior management;
- Economic exploitation of children, which although it is not widespread, does affect particular groups including Roma and children from North Africa and Asia.

EU support for core labour standards in several aspects of its own trading system is welcomed, including its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP+), under which developing countries that respect the core ILO standards are eligible for improved access to the European market. The ETUC and ITUC are currently seeking GSP investigations into abuses of labour rights in Georgia and Uzbekistan.

To read the full report: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/internationally-recognised-core.html>

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

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