

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Unions Tell UN and Governments to Step Up Action Against Racism

Brussels, 22 September 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Trade unions are calling on the UN and its member countries to step up action against racism and xenophobia at today's UN High-Level General Assembly event on racism <URL to <http://www.un.org/en/ga/durbanmeeting2011/resolutions.shtml> >. The ITUC and Public Services International have submitted a joint statement <http://www.ituc-csi.org/commemorating-the-10th-anniversary.html> to the meeting, which takes place ten years after the adoption of the "Durban Declaration".

The statement notes the lack of progress in many countries at tackling racism, and stresses that discrimination and xenophobia are being exacerbated as the global financial and employment crisis deepens.

Rudy De Leeuw, ITUC Vice-President and President of the FGTB Belgium, who is participating in the UN debate on behalf of the ITUC, said "Acts of racism and xenophobia are very often employment related. Trade unions' work is to keep employers accountable to national and international anti-discrimination standards and to promote a climate of tolerance at the workplace. We need to focus much more on temporary work agencies, as several of these agencies tend to have particularly discriminatory hiring practices."

Trade unions are working actively to fight racism at the workplace and the presence of national centres from Brazil, the US, Africa and Europe today in New York testifies of the importance of this issue for workers' organisations.

The ITUC-PSI statement stresses that ILO Convention 111 < <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C111> > on Discrimination in Employment, which has been ratified by 170 countries, is a powerful instrument in fighting for equality and non-discrimination at work; however, urgent steps need to be taken to improve its implementation in many countries . It also insists that countries ratify and implement ILO Conventions 97 < <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C097> > and 143 < <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C143> >

> on Migrant Workers and the UN Convention < URL <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm> > on protecting migrant workers' rights.

"As the world economic crisis deepens, the risks of xenophobia, intolerance and nationalism grow by the day, and governments need to focus real efforts on combatting these tendencies and promoting tolerance and social cohesion," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

To see the programme for the Conference:

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/durbanmeeting2011/schedule.shtml>

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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