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As profits announced, unions pressure DHL to guarantee workforce rights

Brussels, 7 March 2012 (ITUC OnLine): As DHL makes ready to announce solid profits in Frankfurt tomorrow a coalition of global union organisations is challenging the company to prove its respect for the workforce that helped generate them. As part of that challenge the ITUC, UNI and ITF will be unveiling Respect at DHL (www.respectatdhl.org), a new campaign website.

The ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation), ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) and UNI global union want world logistics giant DHL to guarantee the same basic rights to all its workers, wherever they are. This would make the use of lie detectors and intimidation reported by staff at some of its global subsidiaries as unthinkable as the idea of employees in its German home base being treated that way.

"The best way for DHL to celebrate the kind of good practice they like to point to is to spread it across all their operations," commented Alan Tate, UNI Global Union campaigns director. "For us this has always been about two things: dialogue and a negotiated global framework agreement that says 'yes, we think all our workforce deserves the same basic protection and rights'."

He continued: "Going down that route might have saved the company from having its Exel subsidiary fined \$283,000 for health and safety violations last month, after the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration found that over four years it intentionally failed to report 42 serious injuries to workers at a plant it runs for Hershey chocolates."

He concluded: "With DHL embarking on another year of expected profitable trading there's no better time to ensure fairness across all its operations - not just some - and put in place a structure that allows union representation for all DHL workers and prohibits the kinds of sometimes horrifying violations of standards of common decency that are detailed on this new website."

Alongside advice for DHL workers the new website contains a number of testimonies of former staff who report how they were threatened, overworked and even forced to take lie detector tests.

ITUC general secretary Sharan Burrow commented: "DHL is a hugely important global employer, and should ensure the highest standards for all its employees."

ITF global organising coordinator Ingo Marowsky said: "The financial results come out on International Women's Day, and on that day we congratulate the company for finally selecting a women for its board, Angela Titzrath. Our door is always open to constructive talks with the company, and we look forward to opening discussions with her when she takes on her new role as head of labour relations this summer.

"DHL were brought to book yesterday in Norway, whose labour court found that trade union official Monica Okpe had been dismissed under false pretences, and ordered her reinstated and compensated. That case is another timely reminder that DHL has to respect women's rights and all the other rights that those who work for it need to have guaranteed."

"Workers are essential for an unbroken logistics chain," he added, "and DHL are invited to factor that fact in to all their global plans."

The three global union bodies are campaigning to ensure that global delivery companies such as DHL acknowledge their responsibilities as international employers by instituting consistent social policies that recognise and respect labour rights.

For more details please see www.respectatdhl.org and www.itfglobal.org/global-delivery/index.cfm

For more details please contact

ITF: press officer Sam Dawson. Tel: +44 (0) 20 7940 9260. Email: dawson_sam@itf.org.uk

UNI: Richard Elliott, deputy director of communications. Tel: +41 22 365 21 30. Mobile: +41 79 794 9709. Email: richard.elliott@uniglobalunion.org

ITUC: Communications department. Tel: + 32 2 224 0210. Email: press@ituc-csi.org

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