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Serbia: General Strike to Protect Wages and Working Conditions

Brussels, 17 July 2014 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has expressed its full support to the Serbian trade union movement as workers across the country join a general strike against government plans to cut wages and working conditions. The government has ignored established procedures to force changes through parliament affecting minimum wage entitlements, employment provisions, pensions and disability insurance. Foreign business interests, notably the US Chamber of Commerce, have been actively pressing the government to reduce collective bargaining rights, increase the maximum duration of temporary employment contracts, reduce severance pay and holiday allowances and re-define equal pay rules.

Approaches by national trade union centres CATUS and Nezavisnost to the government for dialogue have been rebuffed, leaving the unions no option but to launch the general strike.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, "Serbia's wages are already extremely low by European standards, but foreign investors are looking to scour even more out of a national workforce which is struggling to survive already. The Serbian government needs to stand up to the bully-tactics of corporate power and take the side of ordinary people. It is astounding that the government is following an austerity path even as the complete failure of that approach in Europe and elsewhere is there for all to see."

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 161 countries and territories and has 325 national affiliates.

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