

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
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Supply Chains, Forced Labour and Climate Action top ITUC 2015 Agenda

Brussels, 18 December 2014 (ITUC OnLine): Tackling exploitation in global supply chains, campaigning against modern slavery and action for industrial transformation to reduce carbon emissions will be “frontlines” for action in 2015, following the ITUC’s annual General Council meeting which ended on 18 December in Brussels.

“We have an ambitious work programme for the coming year, following through on our agenda to build workers’ power which we set out at our Berlin Congress last May”, said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. “The scale of exploitation in global supply chains, the acceptance of modern slavery in the world economy and the failures of government and much of industry to face the reality of destructive climate change will be centrepieces of an ambitious ITUC agenda in the coming year. With our national affiliates and regional structures, our global union federation partners and in alliance with others, we will hold governments and employers to account for violations of workers’ rights whenever and wherever they happen. The challenges are substantial, and we are ready to overcome them as a united and determined global trade union movement.”

A Resolution on defending the right to strike, which employer groups are attacking at the ILO, includes a commitment to global action on 18 February, and plans for stepping up action to defend workers’ rights, especially in a target list of “countries at risk”, were adopted. An ITUC Statement on Global Risks <http://www.ituc-csi.org/14th-general-council-resolution-on> put the spotlight on the shrinking of democratic space and the rise of nationalist and extremist sentiment, which sets the stage for broader action around conflict zones, attacks on democracy and confronting xenophobia and political populism. Defence of migrant workers’ rights, with the world facing its biggest refugee crisis in 70 years, featured prominently in the Council’s deliberations. The ITUC endorsed a Statement for its Pakistan affiliate PWF <http://www.ituc-csi.org/14th-general-council-statement-of?lang=en> condemning this week’s brutal terrorist attack on the school in Peshawar which cost some 150 lives.

The General Council’s discussion on the deteriorating global economic situation, with particular focus on the need for governments and international institutions to end destructive austerity policies and tackle unemployment and inequality, led to a clear agenda for advocacy and campaign action for social and economic justice in the coming year. This was also reflected in the ITUC’s commitments to shape the UN’s post-2015 development agenda.

Plans to accelerate and deepen the work of the ITUC global Organising Academy were adopted, following the involvement of over 350 trainees in 2014.

The Council also welcomed the adoption by the International Olympic Committee of labour standards criteria for cities bidding for future Olympics events, with discussions to be held between the IOC, ITUC and Global Union Federations (GUFs) early in 2015 to work on implementation.

“This welcome step by the IOC is in stark contrast to the refusal of FIFA to act effectively on modern slavery in the infrastructure for the 2022 Qatar World Cup, and the appalling decision of the IAAF to hold the 2017 athletics championships in Qatar after receiving a Euros 30million inducement from the Gulf monarchy”, said Burrow. National trade union organisations and GUFs reported on their national and sectoral campaigns to bring an end to the kafala system in Qatar, the world’s richest country, and in other Gulf states.

The 88-member Council, with national union leaders from over 70 countries, is the main decision-making body of the 176 million-member ITUC between its quadrennial Congresses.

Nine new member organisations were accepted into ITUC affiliation: CGTA Algeria, CEDOCUT Ecuador, LLC Lesotho, CITU and CTSP Mauritius, UFTUM Montenegro, CONUSI Panama, KMU Philippines and FESTU Somalia. ZSSS Slovenia was accorded ITUC Associated Organisation status.

“We are pleased to accept these new organisations into membership of the ITUC, to strengthen their position at home, and to enable them to join fully in the decision-making and actions of the world’s trade union body,” said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 161 countries and territories and has 324 national affiliates.

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