

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Nepal: New Constitution Welcomed; Blockade on India Border Must End

Brussels, 30 September 2015 (ITUC): The ITUC has welcomed the promulgation of Nepal's new Constitution, following an overwhelming vote to transform the country from a religious monarchy to a secular republic with protections for fundamental rights and the interests of minorities. The process, begun in 2008 following the end of a long-running civil conflict which cost thousands of lives, culminated with 507 of the 601-member Constituent Assembly voting in favour of the new Constitution. Twenty-five Hindu-nationalist representatives voted against, and others from smaller opposition parties abstained.

Opponents of the new Constitution from areas close to India's border have imposed a blockade on the passage of goods into Nepal, precipitating a severe shortage of fuel and other essentials, inflicting serious damage on the economy and on post-earthquake reconstruction efforts. Nepalese politicians have accused India, which had criticised key aspects of the Constitution, of complicity in the blockade.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, "After years of violent conflict followed by political stalemate, Nepal now finally has a democratic Constitution developed by elected representatives. This is a moment for celebration, and the world, including all of Nepal's neighbours, needs to support the new political dispensation and continue to assist in reconstruction following the outpouring of support in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake."

The ITUC's affiliates in Nepal, ANTUF, GEFONT and NTUC, have welcomed the adoption of the Constitution, which follows a September 4 "Roadmap" agreement between the government and the unions on post-earthquake reconstruction < <http://www.ituc-csi.org/trade-union-roadmap-for-nepal>>.

"Nepal's Constitution opens the way for full respect of freedom of association, women's rights and development based on decent, secure work in a country in which some 90 per cent of workers are in the agricultural or informal sector. More than 500,000 Nepalis look for work outside the country each year, often experiencing severe exploitation and poverty wages. The political basis now exists for Nepal to grow its domestic economy and create good jobs at home," added Burrow.

To read the message to the ITUC Nepal affiliates:

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/nepal-the-promulgation-of-the>

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