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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine  
023/080416

Japan: G7 Labour Leaders Meeting with Prime Minister Abe

Brussels, 8 April 2016 (ITUC OnLine): Labour leaders from the G7 countries yesterday met current G7 Chair and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo, in the lead-up to the G7 Summit next month in Ise-Shima. The delegation, led by Rikio Kozu, President of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation RENGO, presented Abe with a set of trade union priorities for G7 action, under four fundamental pillars:

- reducing inequality
- creating employment and decent work
- achieving gender equality
- achieving environmental sustainability and action on climate.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: "We stressed that reducing inequality requires a comprehensive strategy that includes universal social protection, a minimum living wage and expanded collective bargaining with fundamental rights and effective compliance mechanisms. To create jobs we need investment in infrastructure - enabling green infrastructure that grows jobs and allows the world to meet the challenge of emissions reduction. Climate action requires massive industrial transformation underpinned by a shift to renewable energy, and the transition must be just and support vulnerable workers and communities.

"We urged that refugees be afforded the right to work and integrated into economies with equal treatment. Inclusive growth must be based on a humane world where people can be safe.

"Ensuring decent work in supply chains is also a priority for follow-up from the G7 in Germany. This is now the dominant model of trade and if economic integration and trade agreements are to be trusted by working people, then the model of low-wage, insecure and unsafe work must be reformed. Workers in Asia are amongst the most exploited in the world and we are calling on G7 nations to make due diligence for multinational companies mandatory so the largest companies can be held accountable across borders.

"Gender equality is urgent and overdue. Japan has been a leader in putting the critical issue of women's participation and equal pay on the agenda. This requires investment in the care economy including child care.

"Our delegation also pointed to the importance of social dialogue, which is essential to realise the innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive global economy that Prime Minister Abe seeks," Burrow concluded.

John Evans, General Secretary of the Trade Union advisory Committee to the OECD emphasised that "The global economy is facing the most dangerous moment since 2009 with growth stalled and unemployment likely to rise globally. This situation calls for leadership

from the G7 to coordinate action to kick start growth and create jobs, by expansion of public investment in physical and social infrastructure and measure to raise wages and purchasing power of working families. Trust has fallen in leaders and the "Panama papers" scandal requires action once and for all to stop international tax fraud and end tax havens."

In response, Prime Minister Abe thanked the labour leaders for the recommendations and expressed congratulations for the efforts of trade unions in the current global context.

He said that this G7 Summit will focus on the vulnerability of the global economy, and he recognised that the policies presented by the union delegation were in regard to inclusive and sustainable growth.

He stressed that inclusion requires all citizens to be active, and that the inclusion of women with equal pay is central to this.

Climate change, energy and green infrastructure are critical issues for discussion, and economic integration is a priority. The TPP was the subject of a 7-hour debate in a Parliamentary Committee on 8 April and would be again the following day.

The Prime Minister also said that the G7 will be an open and broad-ranging discussion on all the issues raised, and that seeking consensus from the G7 leaders will be essential.

The union delegation was composed of representatives from the union movements of the G7 countries, the ITUC and its Regional Organisation ITUC-AP, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), and the European Trade Union Confederation.

The ITUC represents 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 333 national affiliates.

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