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ILO Conference: ITUC and ETUC Call for Support for Refugees

Brussels, 30 May 2016 (ITUC OnLine): As the annual conference of the International Labour Organisation starts this week in Geneva, the ITUC and the European Trade Union Confederation are calling on governments to support the right to safe haven and work for all refugees, as the world faces the greatest flow of refugees in 70 years.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "Governments have largely failed to meet their responsibilities under international law, and there is a stark difference between this and the overwhelming public sentiment that refugees need and deserve solidarity and compassion. With so many people trapped in refugee camps abroad or in their home countries, a global, cooperative resettlement strategy along with the funds vital for social protection and the infrastructure to meet refugee needs in host nations are urgently required."

Luca Visentini, ETUC General Secretary, said "People seeking shelter need to be treated with humanity, and according to international law. We cannot accept the EU paying Turkey to keep refugees out of Europe, or the building of walls to shut out people fleeing war. There needs to be a fair redistribution of refugees across Europe. Responsibility cannot be pushed onto a few countries that are on the frontline or are doing the right thing. There needs to be investment in public services to help the refugees and hosting communities, and to integrate refugees into work - strictly on the basis of equal pay for equal work. No exploitation of refugees, no driving down wages."

The ITUC, ETUC and their affiliates are distributing "refugees welcome" badges and copies of a new ITUC/ETUC briefing on the issue to delegates at the conference, which includes government, employer and worker representatives.

The unions are deeply concerned about the death of over 500 refugees in recent days in the Mediterranean, and reiterate their demands for safe legal routes, respect of human lives and suitable reception structures.

To read the briefing: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-special-briefing-the-global>

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

Follow us on the web: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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