

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION  
ITUC OnLine

End Child Labour in Global Supply Chains

Brussels, 9 June 2016 (ITUC OnLine): In the lead-up to the World Day Against Child Labour, 12 June, trade unions are putting the spotlight on the exploitation of children in the global supply chains of multinational companies. Of the 168 million children who are at work instead of in school, many millions are working in agriculture, manufacturing, mining and other sectors, and the goods they produce are an integral part of the reality of global supply chains. At least half of the total child labourers are in particularly hazardous work.

Philip Jennings, General Secretary of UNI Global Union and a co-Chair of the ILO's child labour platform, called for global business to join efforts to eliminate child labour from supply chains, in a June 8 panel discussion at the ILO's annual conference in Geneva. Pointing to the legally-binding Bangladesh Accord <http://bangladeshaccord.org/> as an example of how business can be part of effective solutions to labour rights violations, he said "We will never give up on this endeavour until we have eliminated child labour from this planet".

ILO Director-General Guy Ryder called for a "zero tolerance" approach and told the panel that three ingredients are key to ending child labour:

- \* Free, compulsory and quality basic education at least up to the minimum age for work;
- \* Adoption and enforcement of good laws and policies, with cooperation between labour inspection, the education system and other public services; and
- \* Social protection, which was a main driver of the one-third reduction in child labour globally between 2000 and 2012.

Ryder also spoke of the need for decent jobs for parents as a way to keep children in school and out of work, a point echoed by Andrews Tagoe of the Global March Against Child Labour and Katherine Stewart of retailer Primark.

Following the panel discussion, Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: "It should not be difficult to purge child labour from global supply chains and local production and get the children into school. It's a matter of responsible business and political will. That's why we welcome Canada's announcement during the ILO panel session that it will finally ratify the ILO Minimum Age Convention 138, after years of delay by the former conservative government. We call upon those few remaining countries which have yet to ratify this Convention, or the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182, to do so without any further delay."

The unions are demanding greater urgency, with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals setting a target of 2025 to eliminate child labour. Changing the global supply chain model is a crucial part of this, with the 2016 ITUC "Scandal" report <http://www.ituc-csi.org/new-ituc-report-exposes-hidden> revealing that 94 per cent of the workforce of 50 top multinationals is hidden in subcontracting arrangements which enable the multinationals to escape responsibility.

"It's a supply chain conspiracy against decent work," said Jennings.

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

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