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G8

World leaders came to Evian on 1 June and left on 3 June. PSI affiliates interested in the official outcomes can find a number of communiqués, such as 'Water – a G8 Action Plan', 'Health – a G8 Action Plan', 'Fighting Corruption and Improving Transparency – a G8 Declaration', 'Co-operative G8 Action on Trade', and more at www.g8.fr/evian/english/navigation/2003_g8_summit/summit_documents.html. According to these documents, world leaders are committed to give high priority in Official Development Aid allocation to sound water and sanitation proposals of developing country partners; help mobilise domestic resources for water infrastructure financing; and encourage international financial institutions (IFIs) to give the necessary priority to water. On health, the G8 reaffirmed their commitments to achieving development goals in partnership with developing countries, the private sector, multilateral organisations and non-governmental organisations. On trade, world leaders support progress in WTO negotiations. Nice rhetoric, but no concrete solutions.

ILO Annual Conference

In Geneva, the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference was held 3-19 June. The conference is the annual assembly and main decision-making body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It is attended by some 3,000 delegates and advisors representing governments, employers' organisations and trade unions from 176 countries. PSI Deputy General Secretary, Alan Leather, spoke to the conference on 14 June. He called on the ILO to actively support the concept of quality public services as a way of eradicating poverty and providing services to the dispossessed. He called for more attention to discrimination against trade union members, and rights for international civil servants. He indicated serious concern regarding labour reforms in Chile, the persistent violation of human rights in Colombia, and the lack of basic trade union rights for the Government Employees Union in South Korea. See www.ilo.org.

Rehabilitation support to Iraq

On 9 June, workers' delegates attending the ILO conference called on the ILO to urgently send a needs assessment mission to Iraq to determine what forms of technical support and assistance the ILO can provide in the rehabilitation and

reconstruction programme. In their statement more than 500 workers' delegates from all five continents said they believe that support must be provided for all the people of Iraq, especially the poor, disabled and vulnerable groups. 'Oil and other resources of Iraq must be used solely by the people of Iraq and exclusively for their benefit.' The group called for 'the immediate resumption of work for all Iraqi workers, with due protection of their wages', and for a speedy end to the occupation, 'true democracy, full civil liberties and the right to full self determination' for and by the Iraqi people.

Equality at the ILO

PSI helped prepare the Global Unions' response to the ILO Report on Discrimination 'Time for Equality at Work'. The issues are particularly relevant for the PSI work on pay equity and related subjects including racism, migrant workers and young workers. The union position paper notes that priority areas for action are: extension of labour laws and social protection to informal economy workers; organising and defending informal economy workers; and undertaking studies to identify the contribution of informal economy workers to the overall economy. It also refers to the value of quality public services and the need to maintain basic services, such as water and sanitation in public ownership as an essential mechanism to achieve equality. Gloria Mills from PSI affiliate UNISON spoke on the issues at a special panel discussion for workers' delegates on 11 June. The ILO Governing Body will approve an action plan on how to address discrimination in November.

Killings, beatings, intimidation, harassment...

The annual ICFTU survey of violations of trade union rights, released on 10 June lists some 1,000 union activists attacked and beaten, 2,562 detentions, 89 prison sentences, 30,000 trade unionists sacked and some 20,000 victims of harassment, in addition to the 213 workers killed because of their trade union activities. Colombia remains the most dangerous place for trade union activities; however, many other countries allow persecution in one form or another. Export processing zones (EPZ) have become a symbol of the free market model, where 'free market' means 'free' of trade union rights. Migrant workers are marginalised and exploited. What a world!

The report can be downloaded from www.icftu.org/survey in English, French and Spanish.

Trade union rights in Pakistan

On 10 June, PSI joined other Global Unions in a protest to the Managing Director of the Army Welfare Trust in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. PSI General Secretary, Hans Engelberts, noted that the Trust had issued an order to the management of the Army Welfare Sugar Mills, Badin, to cease recognition of the trade union at the mill, and that such an order was in contravention of the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining set out in Conventions 87 and 98 of the ILO – rights which the government is obliged to uphold. PSI will be following the developments.

PSI Women's Committee met on 15-16 May

The PSI Women's Committee recommended a one-year Constitutional transition period for sub-regions to elect members of the regional executive committees onto the Women's Committee. The Committee agreed to elect Chair and Vice Chairs via written nomination procedures at its next meeting. Members discussed the role of women's committees in the quality public services campaign, and case studies on the maternity protection and pay equity campaigns. The PSI water campaign was introduced as a key issue of relevance to women workers. The Committee agreed to adopt the theme of "health is a human right" for March 8th 2004.

What happened to the 'New Zealand model'?

PSI is receiving a lot of requests for information about the 'New Zealand Experiment' and what is happening to it. From 20 June a new website will explain exactly that. Consult www.psa.org.nz/experiment.asp for background, research, commentary and reports on the failed experiment and public services, quality and the future of work.

Run-up to Cancún - participation

In order to maximise the effect of unionists going to Cancún in September for the WTO Ministerial Conference, ICFTU/PSI want to build a contact list of everyone who is going, whether they are going as an NGO delegation or as part of a government delegation. Please advise Mike.Waghorne@world-psi.org of the names, e-mail addresses and the delegation status (NGO or government) of anyone from your union who is going. Early replies will also allow us to evaluate the possibility of setting up a Cancún newsletter.

Run-up to Cancún – policy

A series of model releases will be prepared by Global Unions in the run-up to Cancún. The first release, which was prepared by ICFTU/PSI, features quality public services. It was timed to coincide with a WTO symposium in Geneva (16-19 June). The release and a model letter, which can be adapted for local use, are available from www.icftu.org.

PSI Report of Activities 2002

The PSI Annual Report of Activities for 2002 will be sent to affiliates from 23 June. An effort has been made to make the report shorter and easier to read. This means that several lists of representatives on various PSI committees and working groups are no longer included in the report. Affiliates interested in looking up who represents them in committees/groups can obtain the information from www.world-psi.org.

Together against torture

The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) is calling for action on 26 June, the United Nations' International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Last year, more than 50,000 people participated in 283 events in 95 countries worldwide. IRCT is hoping for an even wider participation this year. For details and campaign material consult www.irct.org.

Comments

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