

PSI world news

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>PSI CALLS FOR MORATORIUM ON PRIVATISATION OF ENERGY SYSTEMS

>After the giant blackout which hit the USA and Canada in August, similar huge power cuts have affected the UK, Denmark, Sweden and Italy. PSI is calling for a moratorium on energy privatisation and deregulation and the creation of a global commission to explore energy issues. In a recent media release, PSI says that governments must assume their responsibilities to invest in and manage the energy infrastructure. The policies of the World Bank and the IMF that impose blanket restrictions on government spending must be curtailed so that governments can invest in long-term public infrastructure needs. See the media release in English, French and Spanish on www.world-psi.org.

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>AFRECON MEETING ACHIEVES GENDER EQUITY

>PSI's 10th Regional Conference for Africa and Arab countries was held 25-27 September in Nairobi, Kenya. A total of 132 delegates and 37 observers attended the conference, representing 104 affiliated organisations from 35 countries. Gender equity was achieved, with a total of 65 women and 67 men delegates. Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV-AIDS in Africa gave an outstanding presentation, which was followed by workshops. There was also discussion on Corruption and Good Governance by Gladwell Wathioni Otieno, Executive Director of Transparency International Kenya; The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) by Maria Van Driel, PSI women's projects co-ordinator and Quality Public Services by Tâko Kpodar, PSI Regional Secretary and Hans Engelberts, PSI General Secretary. The delegates adopted a resolution on Palestine.

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>REGIONAL WOMEN'S WORKSHOP

>Over 40 participants from the four sub-regions in the PSI Arab and African region attended an action packed regional women's workshop on 22-24 September in Nairobi. The main points of discussion were taken from the programme of action on gender equality, and included gender-mainstreaming, maternity protection and pay equity. The workshop also considered how to ensure a gender perspective in the quality public services campaign and heard from Tandiwe Munyanyi, Chair of the ICFTU youth committee on strategies to organise young people. Canadian educators, Suzanne Doerge and Bev Burke completed their cycle of 'globalisation' workshops at PSI regional meetings. Recommendations on the main workshop issues were submitted to the regional conference for adoption and follow-up within the regional programme of action 2003-2008.

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>HISTORIC FIRST: MARKET VENDORS AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS MEET

>Together with StreetNet International, PSI sponsored a meeting of market vendors' associations, together with PSI affiliated municipal workers' unions from six countries in Africa on 21 September. The meeting was a historic first as StreetNet International Coordinator, Pat Horn stated. Market women are ready to pay taxes to the municipalities but they need to see returns for their money, said Ghana Street Vendors Association representative, Juliana Brown Afari. Municipal agents are often blamed for a situation which is not of their own creation, explained Suzan Sekhonyane from the South African Municipal Workers. The meeting identified a set of common issues where alliances between the unions and vendors associations can result in job creation for public sector workers and better trading conditions for the vendors. Country groups agreed to hold follow-up meetings back home.

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>KENYAN PARLIAMENTARIANS PRESS FOR CONSULTATION

>Dr Mukhisa Kituyi, Kenya's Trade and Industry Minister, was enthusiastically congratulated by the Kenya Parliament for the way he led the country's delegation to the recent World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Cancun, Mexico. At a parliamentary meeting in early October, legislators from both sides of the House demanded the withdrawal of Bills on public procurement and privatisation, saying they had been imposed on the country by foreigners. Kituyi had said the Procurement Bill was more harsh than the conditions Kenya was subjected to at the Cancun meeting. The Kenyan delegation in Cancun had mobilised other African countries to oppose several issues, including the universality of tenders and procurement, trade and investments policy, and provision of generics to poor nations for malaria and AIDS. There was general agreement that the Bills before the parliament should be rejected to reconsider what Kenya, not the international market, wanted. They also agreed that all binding trade agreements and treaties should be brought to the House before they were signed..

>Source: The East African Standard

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>ICFTU WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, TURIN, 24-25 SEPTEMBER

>Nora Wintour, PSI Equality and Rights Officer attended the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Women's Committee meeting at the ILO Turin Training Centre, Italy. The meeting reviewed strategies to improve women's participation in the ILO Conference and in senior staff positions and agreed to write a letter outlining concerns to the Chair of the Workers' Group, Leroy Trotmann. It was also agreed to draw up a plan of action for the committee focusing on a few strategic goals, within the overall theme of organising women. The 2005 ICFTU Congress was discussed, including how to improve women's representation in delegations and the format of the proposed plenary discussion on pay equity and maternity protection.

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>RESULTS OF IMF/WORLD BANK MEETINGS IN DUBAI

>The annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 23-24 September. Many developing country ministers evoked the failure of the Cancun meetings to call for a correction of the 'deficit of democracy' in the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) by increasing the weight of voice of developing countries in IFI decision-making bodies. However, the final communiqué of the joint Development Committee only addresses the issue by delaying it a further year. In reaction to reports showing that many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not be reached by 2015, ministers discussed measures to increase the flow of finances to developing countries. The only concrete proposal, coming from the UK, to create an International Financial Facility, was opposed by some other major industrialised countries, including the US. The final communiqué was vague on the matter. Another 'forgotten' proposal is the Sovereign Debt Restructuring Mechanism (SDRM). Introduced by the IMF as a means for achieving negotiated restructuring of privately-owned developing country debt, the SDRM has now disappeared under US pressure.

>Ministers received a report on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme which showed that it has failed to achieve its promises in all but a handful of countries. Of the 38 countries eligible for debt relief, only eight have received a substantial, but not total, debt write-down through HIPC.

>Another report on implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) process claims that trade union presence in civil society consultations has increased. However, it does not mention that plans for employment-intensive growth and improved working conditions are absent from the majority of completed PRSPs.

>The Committee announced its support for the World Bank's infrastructure action plan. The plan has been criticised by many NGOs following its use for highly contentious megaprojects such as large dam construction.. A coalition of environmental groups launched a critique in Dubai, entitled Gambling with People's Lives, and available on www.foe.org.

>Some progress did take place on the Bank's acknowledgement of the need to incorporate core labour standards into their operations, during forums held parallel to the official meetings.

>For the communiqué of the IMF/World Bank Development Committee, see

www.imf.org/external/np/cm/2003/092203.htm

>For the communiqué of the IMF's International Monetary and Financial Committee, see

www.imf.org/external/np/cm/2003/092103a.htm

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>IFI WATCHNET WEBSITE

>IFIwatchnet connects organisations worldwide which are monitoring International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, the IMF, and regional development banks. The website pools independent

information about IFIs from a broad range of civil society sources to make it easier for people to find what they need; improve communication between IFI-watchers, increasing mutual awareness of outputs and collaboration on activities; and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of IFI watching organisations through new information sharing approaches. Information can be accessed by institution, topic or region.

See www.if-watch.net.

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