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Join the protest – Venezuela

On 25 February PSI joined other Global Union organisations in a protest action against the Chavez governments' warrant issued for the arrest of Carlos Ortega, President of the ICFTU-affiliated Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela, on charges of crimes of rebellion, treason, incitement, association with criminals and destruction of property. The warrant marks an escalation of the current conflict, and reveals the government's will to suppress all democratic expression and independent trade unionism. The charges are clearly politically motivated. They are also a violation of fundamental constitutional rights. More information and a model letter are available from www.world-psi.org.

Attempt to arrest Annie Geron

PSLINK General Secretary and co-chair of the PSI Regional Executive Committee, Annie Geron, risks arrest for exposing high-level government corruption in the Philippines. On 26 February non-uniformed members of the police force, who did not identify themselves, came to the PSLINK building to arrest the General Secretary, Annie Geron. They did not present a formal arrest warrant, and they did not succeed in carrying out the arrest thanks to union members and the arrival of a subsequent police force. It appears that the incident is linked to the recent complaint filed by PSLINK with the Philippine Ombudsman against the Director General of the Technical Education Skills Department Authority (TESDA) for misuse of public funds. PSI is urging affiliates to send letters of protest to the Philippine government. Model letters and background information are available on www.world-psi.org.

ICFTU Women's Conference

A delegation of nine women from PSI worked hard to ensure that key recommendations on public services, pay equity, diversity issues and alliances with the NGO community were included in the final resolutions at the ICFTU Women's Conference in Melbourne, Australia, 18-21 February. Over 300 women attended the conference. Juneia Batista, FETAM, Brazil, was part of a plenary panel discussion on the global economy and the role of

trade unions. She emphasized the importance of defending access to universal public health and education. Annie Geron from PSLINK gave a presentation at a workshop on pay equity, and Vera Morgenstern, Chair of the PSI Women's Committee from Ver.di, Germany, spoke at the plenary on the new PSI Constitution and gender mainstreaming. The first priority issue in the final conference document was safeguarding and developing public services and action against the worst effects of GATS. The Women's Conference also recommended that the ICFTU Congress in 2004 hold a plenary discussion on pay equity and that the ICFTU continue the maternity protection campaign. The Conference also recommended that the ICFTU Congress adopt a living wage campaign.

8 March, International Women's Day

PSI affiliates around the world are marking International Women's Day with the theme "Equality: Our Right!" PSI has distributed a model press release, an article for affiliates' union journals and publicity materials. PSI is calling for women's community health work and child care work to be fairly valued. Hans Engelberts, PSI General Secretary stated: "Women's work continues to be seen as of less value, despite its critical role in our communities. For example, in Colombia 'community mothers' work 40 hour weeks, caring for the children of working parents. The service is provided by the state yet the women are not recognised as public employees and are paid a 'grant', which is 50% under the minimum wage. In India, 2 million women provide health care and services to nursing mothers, yet are paid only a token payment, unrelated to their skills or hours of work. We don't expect men, doing less important work than caring for children, to work without pay, why is it somehow alright for women?" Please inform PSI of your 8 March activities, and send in copies of your publicity materials or photos of activities to include in PSI women's supplement on 8 March. Contact: nora.wintour@world-psi.org

Invitation to OECD consultation

Affiliates are invited to attend OECD consultations in Paris on 2 April involving the Public Management Committee (PUMA) and a delegation from the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) and PSI. Affiliates, especially from OECD countries, are invited to attend subject to liaison with their national centres, and availability of places. The meeting is conducted in English and French. PSI pays no travel or accommodation costs, but is happy to make hotel bookings for affiliates that wish to attend. Contact mike.waghorne@world-psi.org.

Gearing up for 28 April

28 April is the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers. This year's activities will mark the 8th international day to commemorate workers who have been killed, injured or become ill due to unsustainable forms of work or production. Some 2 million workers are killed every year, 1.2 million injured and another 160 million become ill due to work-related conditions. Unions are invited to highlight problems within their region or sector and to consider ways to obtain stronger accountability for all employers – public and private, including through measures that have been developed with union involvement e.g. the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Unions throughout the world are encouraged to start planning for the day.

This year 28 April is also the ILO International Day for Safety and Health at Work. The overall theme will be "Promoting a Safety Culture at Work". Under this umbrella, more specific themes and messages are being planned. A special email address SafeDay@ilo.org has been created to handle

information and queries related to the day.

May Day

Global Unions is calling on trade unions around the world to mobilise on 1 May under the common theme “Respect”. The concept will be developed in the run up to 1 May. A number of sub-themes are envisaged such as “respect for workers’ rights”, “respect through quality public services”, “respect for young workers”, “respect for workers’ health and safety” and “respect for all by ending poverty”. See www.global-unions.org. It is expected that the themes will form a basis of a movement-wide public information campaign in the run up to the next WTO Ministerial in Cancún, Mexico.

Planning for Cancún

NGOs wishing to attend the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún, 10-14 September, are requested to supply, in detail, all necessary information indicating how they are concerned with matters related to those of the WTO. The procedure is waived for those NGOs which were duly registered for at least two previous Ministerial Conferences. Qualifying NGOs are still obliged to register officially. The deadline for requests is 30 April. Registration forms will be sent out by 31 May. Duly completed registration forms should be returned to the WTO, External Relations Division by 30 June. Confirmation of registration will be sent to NGOs as from 1 August. See www.wto.org.

All EU’s GATS cards on the table!

Affiliates following the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) and the request/offer developments will be interested to know that a full list of all EU’s GATS market access requests to 109 other WTO member governments is finally in the public domain. It is now clear, for example, that the EU requests are targeting water services in developing countries where they are effective and not privatised (such as Brazil, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Honduras and Tunisia) and countries where privatisation has been highly unpopular (such as Bolivia, Egypt, Panama, Trinidad, India and Colombia). The leaked documents, which were first obtained by the Polaris Institute, are available from www.polarisinstitute.org/gats/main.html. The World Development Movement (WDM), one of the NGOs participating in the “Our World Is Not for Sale” network, of which PSI is also a member, has done a table and an analysis of what it all means (see www.wdm.org.uk/action/EUleaksmedia.htm). Contact mike.waghorne@world-psi.org

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