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### The War

Working people and their trade unions around the world have raised their voices to call for the Iraq crisis to be resolved peacefully and through the United Nations. This possibility has been squandered by the rush to war.

(Global Unions' statement 'Iraq: Global Unions Deplore Unacceptable and Unjustified Decision to Go to War', 20 March; [www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)). All over the world trade unions have spoken out against the war. The PSI

Regional Executive Committee for Africa and Arab countries, meeting in Cairo 19-21 March, was no exception. The problem is that the war is here. The war that has been unfolding is neither clean, quick nor 'surgical'. It is just as messy and ugly as wars have always been..

### Union victory in South Korea

A piece of good news among all the bad is that Dan Byung-Ho, President of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) has been released after 20 months' imprisonment. Sentenced to 2 years in jail for 'obstructing business', the union movement has argued that he and other imprisoned unionists were only guilty of trying to protect the living standards of millions of Korean workers. The imprisonment was lately denounced again at the 59th March Session of the UN Committee on Human Rights in Geneva.

### Water for the poor

One of the hot topics at the World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan was how to finance water development projects and who should pay for them. While the corporate sector and its backers tend to stress the need for more financing from banks for more private sector projects in order to help the poor, representatives from unions and PSI argue that money should be invested in public water systems as a better way to meet people's right to water and ensure community control of innovative and sustainable water systems. The argumentation is backed up by three research reports from Public Services

International Research Unit (PSIRU) entitled 'Financing water for the world - an alternative to guaranteed profits', 'Water Multinationals - no longer business as usual' and 'International Solidarity in Water' subtitled 'Public -Public Partnerships in North-East Europe'. All reports are available from [www.psiru.org](http://www.psiru.org). See also [www.world-psi.org](http://www.world-psi.org) and [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca) for information and media releases from the Forum.

#### Water for the poor - bis

Affiliates interested in the report of the World Panel on Financing Water Infrastructure, chaired by Michel Camdessus (former head of IMF), can download it from [www.worldwatercouncil.org/download/CamdessusReport.pdf](http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/download/CamdessusReport.pdf). The report, which is entitled 'Financing Water for All', received mixed reviews at the Forum. For example, the Dutch minister for Development Co-operation told journalists that the report was 'disappointing' and 'not balanced...not concrete' with too much focus on large-scale infrastructure. We need to look at small- and medium-scale infrastructure, she said. Others, such as Indian environmental activist Dr. Vandana Shiva, denounced the report as a recipe for privatisation. Michel Camdessus felt that the report had been misinterpreted. 'If you read it carefully, there is not one single word on privatisation in this report,' he said.

#### IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings

The Global Unions' statement to this year's Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Washington, 12-13 April) calls for substantial expansion of debt relief for low-income countries. The statement also calls for the establishment of international debt arbitration procedures and for other measures to protect against global financial instability. It further suggests that International Financial Institutions (IFIs) need to take practical action in line with their stated support for core labour standards, and urges the IFIs to provide financial support for quality public services. The full text of the statement, entitled 'A Global Stimulus Plan: Role of the IFIs to Avoid World Recession and Promote Social Development', is available from [www.icftu.org](http://www.icftu.org).

#### WDR 2004/e-discussion

The World Bank's 'World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People' is about how countries can accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals by making services work for poor people. As reported earlier, PSI has already been involved in discussions with the Bank on the contents of the report. From 14 April PSI affiliates will have the opportunity to join those discussions and, electronically, make their views known. Brendan Martin, Public World, will monitor the e-discussions. The first week has been earmarked for preliminary discussion about general issues. From 21 April the more structured discussion will begin, focused on weekly themes. It is scheduled to run for six weeks. Register by going to [www.publicworld.org](http://www.publicworld.org) and click on the WDR 2004 icon. Affiliates are strongly encouraged to join the proceedings at any time.

#### UN Convention on Migrant Workers

The International Convention on the 'Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families' will enter into force on 1 July. The Convention seeks to play a role in preventing and eliminating the exploitation of migrant workers, and in particular prevent illegal or clandestine recruitment and trafficking. The Convention also imposes a series of obligations, as it requires states to establish policies on migration. Other requirements are exchange of information with other states parties; provision of information to

employers, workers and their organizations on policies, laws and regulations; and assistance to migrant workers and their families. More than 150 million people (or 2 per cent of the world's population) live and work in a country other than that of their birth or citizenship. Consult [www.december18.net/Unconvention.htm](http://www.december18.net/Unconvention.htm) for details including the Convention text in different languages.

#### **Women's leadership training**

From 4-15 March, Nora Wintour, PSI Equality and Rights Officer and Lakshmi Vaidhiyanathan, Asia Pacific Women's Project Coordinator led an external evaluation mission on the Asia Pacific Women's Education and Organising Project. The project has been implemented in 15 countries in the region over the last three years. The focus is on women's leadership training and development of campaign skills. The evaluation included field visits to Chennai, Southern India, Thailand and Bangladesh. In addition to the PSI representatives the team consisted of Jenny Albano, Philippine development consultant (who conducts the external evaluation), Hannu Ohvo, Director of SASK/Finland, and Merja Launis, Head of the International Unit of KTV/Finland. The external evaluation report is to be finalised by mid-April.

#### **Networking and collective bargaining rights**

From 8-26 March, Jenny Luck, Education Co-ordinator at PSI Headquarters, participated in an evaluation of the LO/Norway sponsored Trade Union Rights Network project which covers four countries in South East Asia and is reaching the end of the second phase. The evaluation team, consisting of two external evaluators, the project coordinator and the PSI representative, visited affiliates in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The project focuses on (1) raising awareness about the absence of collective bargaining rights in the public sector and (2) developing a network within the unions with the skills to report the consequent workplace violations that occur and develop campaigns in support of this right. The team met with a wide range of union leaders and members, observed activities and discussed the issues with national centres and other human rights groups. The evaluation will provide the basis for the submission of an application for a third phase to LO/Norway.

#### **GATS - on the road to more transparency?**

Pressure for transparency in relation to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is increasing. Civil society actors, including unions, have recently scored some points as all requests to the US from all countries are now in the public domain. Consult [www.tradeobservatory.org](http://www.tradeobservatory.org). The US offer is at [www.ustr.gov](http://www.ustr.gov). In Australia, Trade Minister Mark Vaile announced (26 March) that the government intended to publish its offer at the same time as the offer is lodged with the WTO in Geneva. The Minister acknowledged that the government was acting in response to 'considerable community interest'. It is now available from [www.dfat.gov.au/trade/negotiations/services/index.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/negotiations/services/index.html). In New Zealand, the Prime Minister reported (31 March) that the initial offer has been finalised, and that Trade Negotiations Minister Jim Sutton will release it publicly. On a more sobering note it could be said that these disclosures are no substitute for a meaningful, widespread public debate.

#### **Comments**

Please email comments on PSI World News to [psi@world-psi.org](mailto:psi@world-psi.org).

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