

PSI World News 10-04

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PSI AFFILIATES HELP KOREAN ELECTRICITY UNION BLOCK PRIVATISATION

The KNEWU put up a determined and courageous resistance to government plans to privatise their energy system. Their five year battle included many demonstrations, mobilisations, imprisonments, educational events - just about the full range of tools available to unions. They even got involved in the electoral process and helped elect a more friendly government. But the most interesting tactic of their campaign was the tripartite commission (government, academia, labour) mandated by the Korean President to make a comparative analysis of energy privatisation and deregulation in other countries, and to bring forward recommendations that the President would respect. PSI helped the commission decide which countries to visit and which unions to speak with. On 31 May, the commission submitted its final report citing the dangers of deregulation and privatisation, and calling on new energy policies for Korea. We now await Presidential endorsement and change of national policy. Many thanks from KNEWU to all of the unions that assisted in this ground-breaking effort! And congratulations to all of the workers and union leaders in Korea - what a great fight!

THE EU NOW A G90 MEMBER?

A number of NGOs in Geneva, including PSI, have written a letter to all members of the G90 Group at the WTO - essentially, the least developed countries, the Africa Group and the African-Caribbean-Pacific Group - calling on them to reject a draft paper drawn up in their name but which appears to be a capitulation to all of the European Union's negotiating demands at the WTO. If this were the G90 position, it would mean that the WTO Doha Round of negotiations would be back on track, with the EU and US getting most of what they want, at huge costs to the G90 countries. The reason that NGOs have written the letter - which is available in English only on the PSI website by clicking [here](#) or from Mike.Waghorne@world-psi.org - is that the draft paper runs directly opposite to a paper drawn up only a day or so beforehand in Kigali by the African Trade Ministers. There is speculation that the draft has been drawn up by the EU and submitted by a small core of G90 people, without discussion with the rest of the group. Affiliates in the G90 countries may want to use the letter in lobbying their government as urgently as is possible.

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

A global mobilisation is being planned for 2005, in support of the UN's Millennium Development Goals. PSI is a member of the Steering Group of a coalition of NGOs which plans to build maximum pressure on governments to support the policy changes needed to meet the Goals. The campaign theme is Make Poverty History. The MDGs identify priorities such as the elimination of extreme poverty and hunger, education for all primary school age children, reversal of the spread of HIV/ AIDS and other diseases, the empowerment of women and sustainable development. Next year the UN will formally review progress towards achieving the Goals by the target date of 2015. The results so far show that most will not be met in most countries unless there are decisions to increase and improve aid, to cancel debt and to provide fair trade rules. A key factor in reaching the Goals is an investment in quality public services, making the global campaign highly relevant to PSI's objectives.

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS IN RUSSIA: NATIONAL PROTEST ACTION 10 June

The Russian government intends to cut down health services as well as salaries and benefits for health workers in order to decrease state expenditure. Wage negotiations are to be transferred from federal level to the level of the subjects of the Federation and the municipalities. The unions' position is that this is a violation of ILO convention no. 100 and call for a nation-wide massive protest movement on 10 June. See more on www.world-psi.org.

ILO SUPPORTS BARGAINING RIGHTS FOR MUNICIPAL WORKERS IN CHILE

PSI Chilean affiliates ASEMUCH, with the support of PSI, requested a legal opinion from the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Standards after the government's decision in 2003 to introduce legislation which would deny bargaining rights to municipal workers. The Committee, at its meeting in December 2003, observed that municipal employees should enjoy the right to collective bargaining. It requested that the government of Chile reply but to date the government has not indicated any intention to comply with these international standards. During the International Labour Conference presently taking place in Geneva, PSI and ASEMUCH met with Bernard Gernigon, chief of the ILO Freedom of Association Branch. The ILO reiterated its support of the union's right to bargain in the municipal sector. PSI also requested a meeting with the Chilean Minister of Labour, Ricardo Solari who was attending the Conference. The ruling concerns 40,000 municipal workers in the country.

ICFTU/TUAC STATEMENT to UNCTAD XI

ICFTU and TUAC have drawn up a statement for the UNCTAD XI meeting to be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 13 -18 June. PSI's Mike Waghorne also participated in the preparation of the statement. The statement stresses six issues for UNCTAD's work, which include full access to trade unions and to other representative organisations of civil society, as a counterpart to its arrangements for engagement with the business sector. The statement continues under four sub-headings, namely Developing Strategies in a Globalising World Economy; Building Productive Capacity and International Competitiveness; Assuring Development Gains from the International Trading System and Trade Negotiations; and Partnerships for Development. The whole statement can be found in English on the ICFTU website:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991219322&Language=EN>

DEBT RELIEF FOR CONFLICT COUNTRIES

A recent report by NGO World Vision proposes that the debt relief programme administered by the IMF and the World Bank be extended to sixteen post-conflict countries. This would include countries such as Haiti and Sri Lanka that are excluded from the current Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. It would follow up on the precedent created by the IFIs and the US in their promotion of a huge debt write-off for Iraq, another non-HIPC country. The total debt of the 16 countries worst hit by conflict could be forgiven for \$84bn, a lot less than the \$134bn owed by Iraq.

150th COUNTRY SIGNS AGAINST WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR

Kyrgyzstan has become the 150th country to sign ILO Convention No. 182 against the worst forms of child labour. The Convention was adopted unanimously by the International Labour Conference in 1999 and has received the most ratifications in the shortest time of any Convention in the 85-year history of the ILO. This 150th ratification brings universal ratification by all 177 ILO member states within sight. Convention No. 182 identifies the worst forms of child labour as those which have a debilitating effect on the health, morals or psychological wellbeing of children. This includes work in dangerous industrial activities such as mining; illegal activities such as prostitution, pornography and drug trafficking; work in extreme conditions of heat or cold and work that involves exposure to hazardous substances and chemicals.

MATERNITY PROTECTION CONVENTION HAS BEEN RATIFIED BY AUSTRIA

ILO Convention 183 was ratified by Austria on 30th April. Austria is the eighth country to ratify the Convention, which came into force in February 2002. The other countries that have ratified the Convention are all in Europe: Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. For the full text of the convention, go to <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/>.

PARTICIPATE IN THE WORLD BANK E-DISCUSSION ON PRIVATISATION AND LABOUR

The World Bank's electronic discussion on the question "Does privatisation lead to layoffs and worsen labour conditions?" is continuing until 18 June. There have been three trade union contributions, but the majority of postings have been from World Bank staff and anti-union consultants. Affiliates who have experience with the consequences of privatisation or who can defend the need to respect workers' rights during privatisation are encouraged to post contributions. Please go to the following website to read previous contributions and post your own: <http://rru.worldbank.org/Discussions/topics/topic38.aspx>.

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