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PSI Executive Board: climate change, China and the world financial crisis



PSI's Executive Board (EB) held its yearly meeting in Geneva, 28-30 April. It was the first meeting of the Board since the 100-year Congress in Vienna in September 2007 and the first under the new General Secretary Peter Waldorff.

The EB welcomed several new members, including young workers' representatives, and participants debated and adopted the reports and plans presented by PSI on trade union rights, public administration, equality, union solidarity, and health.

EB members participated in two workshops: on climate change and on the process for the organisational review of PSI. [Read more here](#).

Asian Development Bank must fund public services before private profits



PSI participated in the Asian Development Bank meeting in Madrid on 5 May. While welcoming some elements of the ADB's "Strategy 2020" (The Long-Term Strategic Framework for the Asian Development Bank), leaders of PSI expressed deep concern about the bank's growing emphasis on privatization and funding of private sector operations in Asia. "When there are limited resources, shouldn't the priority be to use them to strengthen critical public services, especially when those funds, provided by donor countries, come from the public sector?" asked Annie Geron, Vice-President of PSI. [Read more here](#).

PSI Health Service Task Force meeting in Geneva



The PSI Health Service Task Force (HSTF) held its annual meeting in Geneva from 12-14 May. At this year's meeting, the main goal was to discuss the implementation of the strategic objectives adopted at the 2007 PSI Congress. The extensive agenda included a discussion by the members on ways to develop or support existing programmes aimed at reducing health and safety hazards, and integrate those programmes with efforts to build a Quality Health Services Campaign.

To read more on HSTF issues including the related documents please visit the Dr Jorge Mancillas' PSI Health Blog: <http://healthblog.world-psi.org>. Dr Mancillas is the Health Services

officer.

PSI declaration on 1st May

On the occasion of 1st May, PSI renewed its call to governments to do more than pay lip service to international instruments on human rights and labour standards and to take urgent steps to guarantee the exercise of trade union rights and the safety of trade unionists. PSI General Secretary, Peter Waldorff said "The fundamental importance of trade union and labour rights is well recognised within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However 60 years on, many workers still do not benefit from these most basic human rights. In Colombia at least 22 trade unionists have been killed so far this year; in Turkey police frequently use brutal force to break up legitimate peaceful protests. These are just a couple of examples."

"Too many public service workers are still denied the right to organise and to bargain collectively with their employer. Strong public services depend on workers who are treated decently at work and are able to freely exercise the rights given to them by international instruments. Without strong, quality public services it is impossible to achieve a more just and equitable society where discrimination, poverty and hunger become things of the past." [Read more here.](#)

South African municipal workers strike



Municipal workers in Lesedi, a community in Heidelberg, South Africa, near Johannesburg have been on strike since mid-March. They are demanding that the salaries of all municipality workers be increase by two levels, but management has refused despite the strike that is now in its ninth week.

About 300 of the strikers have been threatened with firing while the local managers have awarded themselves substantial increases and bonuses.

At a rally on 25 April, leaders of the Lesedi branch of SAMWU presented the mayor with a list of demands and urged the council to get back to the negotiating table. The crowd peacefully chanted and sang its support for the workers as armed police watched them.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) organised the rally and local and regional leaders brought strong messages of solidarity. The Lesedi workers were very pleased to receive support and solidarity from fellow PSI affiliate the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), whose senior researcher Ron Verzuh brought greetings of solidarity to the rally at the strikers' request.

23 June Public Services Day



The UN General Assembly on 20 December 2002, designated 23 June as Public Service Day. It encourages member states to organise special events on that day to highlight the vital contribution of public administration workers around the world. This day is of course particularly important for PSI and its affiliates. PSI will be sending out a copy of its new quality public services resource. It's a useful folder containing posters, stickers, a leaflet about the campaign and the PSI global policy and strategic objectives. The documents are also available below. PSI is

planning to mark 23 June by a call to action for increased funding for development, to ensure adequate resources to promote quality public services. PSI will also call for unions to urge civil society and governments to resist the policies of the WTO and regional and bilateral trade agreements that weaken the capacity of the public sector and reduce the tariff revenues that are an essential element of funding public services in many developing countries. PSI will issue a

→ on 23 June.

For 23 June, affiliates are also invited to mark the day by media events or other activities to launch the PSI quality public services promotional materials, and to call on governments to meet their commitments under the Millennium Development Goals through increasing funding to essential public services.

If you wish to have extra copies of the materials, please contact PSI. It would also be very useful to hear what your union will plan for 23 June. Please contact communications@world-psi.org.

[QPS Poster \(3MB\)](#)

[QPS Leaflet \(160KB\)](#)

[QPS Sticker \(75KB\)](#)

NAMA – contact your trade ministry

The negotiations on Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) are being held in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and union representatives have noted a move towards a horizontal process in the negotiations which is intended to result in an agreement on full modalities in NAMA and Agriculture.

This is a very important issue: the outcome of NAMA negotiations will have a significant impact on public services in many of the least developed countries.

The WTO Director-General has announced that he expects to be able to convene meetings with significant involvement of Trade Ministers very soon, with a view to finalising an agreement on Agriculture and NAMA as well as on the broad outlines of final agreements in the various other areas for decision. The ITUC has prepared a new model letter which PSI affiliates are urgently invited to send to Trade Ministers on the subject of NAMA. You can find the letter [here](#).

Please let us know what reactions you get from your Trade Ministry.

Brutal police action breaks up Istanbul May Day celebration



Trade unions and other organisations attempted to assemble peacefully in Taksim Square, Istanbul on 1 May. Public Services International (PSI) has reacted with outrage at the Turkish Government and police forces' response.

Police dispersed crowds marching towards Taksim Square with tear gas, water cannons and batons. PSI understands that the number of people arrested was as high as 2,800 and that several demonstrators, including trade union activists, sustained injuries. Patients in nearby Şişli Eftal hospital also suffered from the effects of tear gas. PSI General Secretary, Peter Waldorff said, *"The use of such disproportionate force to prevent citizens exercising their lawful human rights is clearly unacceptable. Turkey has aspirations of joining the European Union, yet continues to flout the very principles upon which the EU was founded in the most outrageous way. If Turkey expects to join the EU it must demonstrate its commitment to democracy and the observance of human rights, including the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly."* [Read more here](#).

Tasmanian public servants stop work



Some 18,000 public servants in Tasmania attended stopwork meetings in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie commencing May 5. The meetings include officials, administrative staff, dental technicians, cleaners, hospital aides, and parks and wildlife personnel. The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) and the Health and Community Services Union called the meetings after reaching a deadlock in negotiations with the state government for a new wage agreement. CPSU state secretary Tom Lynch said the government's latest offer failed to address any of the six issues the unions had highlighted. The CPSU has been negotiating for almost two years to have Tasmanian public servants paid the same as their interstate counterparts. The government is holding firm on its initial offer of 3 percent over four years. The unions want 9 percent immediately and 3.5 percent a year for the next four years.

Tasmania has been seen as a cheaper place to live than the rest of Australia, but this is no longer the case. Housing prices, interest rates, fuel costs and other associated living costs are now the same as on the mainland, but salaries lag behind.

Get the latest news with RSS!



How would you like to receive news from PSI directly onto your computer? RSS makes it possible, and this technology is now available to PSI affiliates via the links on the PSI homepage.

For a simple explanation of what RSS is and how it can simplify your access to information, watch this video <http://blip.tv/file/205570/>

Further explanation is available on this Wikipedia article, which exists in several languages: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_\(file_format\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_(file_format)).

You may also like to include the PSI feed on your website: see the example of PSI affiliate CUPE on <http://www.cupe.ca/globaljustice>.

South Africa: Court rules water meters unconstitutional



On 30 April, the Johannesburg High Court ruled that prepaid water meters are unconstitutional and infringe the rights of users. The case was brought before the court by five Soweto residents who claim prepaid meters violate the bylaws intended to protect access to water for the poor.

The meters automatically disconnect water supply after a free basic amount of six kiloliters have been consumed - an amount residents in Phiri in Soweto say is not nearly enough.

The Wits Law Clinic's Stuart Wilson says the ruling is groundbreaking.

He says the ruling shows the government that they must find another way of dealing with poor people.

The South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) welcomes the High Court decision and salutes the Johannesburg Coalition against Water Privatisation for taking this matter to court.

"The judgement is a wake up call for government to urgently review its unpopular policies to ensure that the poor receive decent water provision" said SAMWU General Secretary Mthandeki Nhlapo.

SAMWU will take measures to implement the Johannesburg High Court decision. The union is already working with public interest lawyers in Cape Town against the introduction of pre-paid water meters in poor areas.

The union notes that pre-paid water meters are only introduced in townships and ghetto areas. These areas pay a much higher price per litre for water than the affluent suburbs.

Bush gets it wrong, again



George Bush has accused India and China as being responsible for the world food crisis, saying that as wealth in those countries increases, the population eats more, thus pushing up food prices. Bush should do some deeper research. In fact, the amount of food consumed per person is five times higher in the US than in India. Each Indian gets to eat about 178 kg of grain in a year, while a US citizen consumes 1,046 kg. Milk consumption, in fluid form, is 78 kg per year for each person in the US, compared to 36 kg in India and 11 kg in China. Vegetable oils consumption per person is 41 kg per year in US, while Indians are making do with just 11 kg per year. A significant proportion of India's population is vegetarian, and so, this is all the food that they get, apart from vegetables and pulses. But the source of carbohydrates and fats is mainly derived from food grains and oils. As far as meat consumption is concerned, the US leads the world in per capita consumption by a wide margin. Beef consumption, for example, is 42.6 kg per person per year, compared to a mere 1.6 kg in India and 5.9 kg in China. In case you are thinking that perhaps Indians might be going in for chicken, think again. In the US, 45.4 kg poultry meat is consumed every year by each person, compared to just 1.9 kg in India. But the story would not be complete without mentioning the plight of Africa, where food grain consumption in 2007 was a mere 162 kg per year for each person, or about 445 grams per day. Don't forget they are not getting any meat or milk products out there.

(Source: *The Times of India*, 4 May 2008)

New Global Unions website



The Global Unions website has undergone a transformation to update it with the latest news from the Global Union Federations. On the website, www.global-unions.org, you can find links to all the latest news items from PSI and its sister organisations.

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