

CHARTER

The rights of working women

*The first Charter was adopted in 1965.
This revised text was adopted by the
11th World Congress in October 1975.*

Preamble

The economic activity of women is essential for the economy, society at large, the family and women themselves. By their work, women contribute to the development of their country, to improving the standards of living of their families, to the enhancement of their own personalities and their individual capacities.

In all countries nevertheless, women still encounter considerable discrimination, both from the social and legal point of view ; and this is of course at variance with the interest of the economy and well-being of the family and society.

In economically and socially advanced countries, while some progress has been made, discrimination still exists. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value has not yet been fully implemented. Vocational education and training opportunities

are more limited for women than for men, and access to certain professions and jobs is blocked or discouraged. What is more, the social infrastructures designed to meet the needs of workers with family responsibilities are clearly inadequate.

In the developing countries, the problems which women workers have to face are substantially the same as in the industrial countries. But they are greatly aggravated by unemployment, underemployment, illiteracy and a lack of social welfare provisions. The living conditions which prevail impose particularly heavy burdens upon women.

Trade unions have made a fundamental contribution towards improving living and working conditions for women and are committed to continue their action thereof.

OBJECTIVES

The solution to these problems, which cannot be kept separate from those of workers as a whole, requires that the following objectives be attained;

- the elimination of discrimination based on sex or marital status;*
- the eradication of prejudices as to the role of women and their employment;*
- the creation of equal conditions of access to employment.*

To this end, the international free trade union movement will do all in its power to secure for women the rights set down in this charter.

I. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

1. Girls and boys should have the same education opportunities. Co-education will be encouraged. Lifelong education will be based on the same principles of equality. A particular effort is necessary in the developing countries, where the educational gap between the sexes is widest.

II. RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT

2. The right of women to employment should be recognised in all countries. They should have full access to economic life, and all efforts should be made in compliance with ILO Convention No. 111 to eliminate any discrimination based on sex regarding access to employment and jobs, education, vocational training, promotion and job security. The arbitrary division of labour between men and women should disappear.

Every effort should be made to achieve and maintain full employment. Women should benefit from these efforts on the same footing as men.

Vocational training

3. Women and girls should have access to vocational guidance and training on the same terms and conditions as men and boys.

4. Special measures should be taken to foster equality of opportunity and treatment for women and girls in employment and occupation and also to give a vocational training to women who seek to enter or re-enter into employment after a relatively lengthy absence from the labour market.

Promotion on the job

5. Access to higher posts should be open to both men and women in all fields and under the same conditions.

Remuneration

6. The implementation of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value is an essential aspect of equal rights and a priority aim of the international free trade union movement. This remuneration includes not only the ordinary or minimum basic salary, but also any additional emoluments either in cash or in kind. However, maternity allowance or any other special benefits for the working mother

should not be considered as an argument against equal pay.

7. The ILO Convention No. 100 should be ratified in all countries and implemented without delay. No departure from the principle of equal pay for work of equal value will be allowed in collective agreements.

Social Security

8. All discrimination against women in social security schemes must be abolished. Equivalent benefits should go with the same obligations.

Social and health protection

9. The international labour standards relating to social and health protection applicable to women (for example, relating to night work, underground work, heavy or unhealthy work) should be complied with. With a view to improving the quality of life and in the light of recent technical developments and trends in working conditions, the extension of these standards to all workers should be sought.

III. MATERNITY PROTECTION

11. Women must have the right and the opportunity to plan their families and to choose motherhood freely.

11. Maternity protection ought to be considered a duty of society. The aim of maternity protection is to safeguard the health and welfare of mother and child and prevent women workers from being economically penalised on account of their giving birth to children. It should not be a cause of discrimination in any field.

12. The minimum standards of maternity protection laid down in ILO Convention No. 103 and Recommendation No. 95 should be implemented. Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that legislation and collective agreements guarantee the application of these standards to all working women, including those employed in industrial homework, part-time work, in agriculture and in domestic service.

13. The working woman who give birth to a child should be granted sufficient compensation for loss of earnings during the compulsory leave period, which should be at least 12 weeks.

14. Women should not be employed in any work which might endanger their maternal functions. Studies should be made on the dangers which may arise from new substances and techniques.

IV. FAMILY RESPONSABILITIES

15. It is a duty of society to place at the disposal of working parents the social infrastructures necessary for them to harmonise their occupational and private lives. They would be aided by certain general measures such as an all-round reduction in working hours, flexible working hours and better adjusted school hours.

The mother or the father should be allowed, after the maternity leave of the working woman, to take leave for a period of up to one year, and the rights linked to their employment should not be forfeited, particularly as far as employment security, promotion rights and social benefits such as health, insurance, pensions and other rights are concerned.

Social welfare services such as crèches, child-care services, children's health services, family aid, transport, housing and other community facilities to meet the requirements of families should be provided, and in any event placed under the supervision of the public authorities. They should be run on the principle of public service and not of profit.

V. RIGHT OF ASSOCIATION

16. ILO Convention No. 87 lays down that all workers have the right to form and join the trade union of their choice. Women workers ought to be able to enjoy this right and to derive from it the same protection and benefits as men.

VI. INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNIONS

Organisation

17. The importance for women of being organised within the trade unions should be recognised by women themselves as well as by the community as a whole.

The organisation of women workers should be one of the permanent objectives of the trade union movement in both industrialised and developing countries.

Trade union training

18. In order to enable women trade unionists to assume offices at all levels of the trade union organisations, it is necessary to ensure equal access to trade union training. Care should be taken to plan the courses so that women can attend. Where necessary, special courses should be organised for women.

Problems of women workers should be included in general trade union educational programmes at all levels.

Access to decision-making levels

19. There ought to be adequate representation of women at the executive level of the trade union organisations. Access to higher offices in the trade unions ought to be open to women on the same terms and conditions as to men. Where necessary, special women officers should be appointed.

20. The knowledge and experience of women trade unionists should be fully utilised. They should be encouraged to assume responsibilities and to act as spokesmen of the trade union movement at all levels and not be confined simply to dealing with women workers' issues. The influence and role of women's committees should, however, be recognised and the setting-up of committees wherever it is useful should be encouraged.

21. Delegations to trade union congresses, national or international, as well as to conferences of the United Nations, its specialised agencies and other organisations, should also include women.

CONCLUSION

The ICFTU recognises the extensive and valuable contribution made towards the improvement of the status of women by the United Nations Organisation and its Specialised Agencies, particularly the International Labour Organisation, and by the trade unions.

It is also aware of the great deal that still remains to be done and of the many problems arising from the changing conditions of women's employment.

The ICFTU THEREFORE APPEALS to governments, the United Nations Organisation, its Specialised Agencies and particularly the International Labour Organisation, the trade unions and all other progressive forces to do their utmost to implement and further the principles set out in this Charter.