

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
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Check Against Delivery
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We are the voice of opposition; we are the voice of progress.

Welcome to the 3rd Congress of the ITUC.

We are the largest democratic force on earth. With nearly 180 million members, we stand as representatives of working people all over the world.

We share a commitment to a set of values enshrined in our constitution - peace, democracy, rights, the dignity of work and social justice.

We fight together for workers' rights everywhere.

We abhor the attacks by too many governments on fundamental rights and the wages and the social protection of their people - governments who are covered by the power of big finance and big business.

We are the voice of opposition and we are the voice of progress.

Corporate power stands for the profits of the 1%. Their tools are inequality, precarious work and supply chain exploitation. We are the opposition who will stand on the frontlines to defend democracy and rights and we are the movement that will fight for justice.

We know who we stand with. We stand with the world's 2.9 billion working people.

60 percent of working people are employed in the formal sector where workers are facing increasingly precarious employment arrangements

And 40 percent in the informal sector - the sector of desperation where there are no rights, no minimum wages and no social protection.

Christina, our sister from Spain says it all,

"There is a feeling of hopelessness, people are afraid. If you can't bargain you can't get a decent wage."

What working people want

Full employment and decent work for all is non-negotiable.

We will organise for just that - for jobs, for collective bargaining, for minimum wages on which you can live and for universal social protection.

And we know that working people respect the role of unions.

The ITUC Global Poll found

63 percent of people think workplaces with unions have better wages, conditions and safety.

We know people have lost trust in Government.

There is not a single country where a majority believes the economic system is fair to most people.

We know what the worlds' people want even if our governments don't.

87 percent and more favour their government providing workers with unemployment benefits, decent retirement incomes, affordable access to health care, education and paid maternity leave.

And we are organising to achieve just that, organising in the informal sector; organising migrant workers and domestic workers; women, and young workers.

With the global union federations we are building campaigns against exploitative companies;

And we are organising against slavery beginning with Qatar.

Four years of turmoil

We have come through four years of turmoil since we met at the Vancouver Congress.

The great recession was born in America where the greed of big finance quickly became a bitter crisis of global unemployment and sovereign debt as governments moved from stimulus to austerity.

At the Vancouver Congress we were optimistic of recovery. But in their desperation to appease the bond markets and the ratings agencies and the troika - with the IMF, the European Commission, and the European central banks, governments in crisis countries went to war on their own people slashing collective bargaining rights, minimum wages, social protection, government services and jobs.

It failed.

We said it would fail and it failed.

Georgia a young woman from Greece understood all too well. She told us

“The IMF have ruined my life. I will never forgive them what they did to me, to my mother. My mother's pension was slashed, she can't live and I can't help her.”

The world needs a pay rise

The global wages slump continues. Romania and Portugal are just two examples where the IMF demanded the government smash collective bargaining by more than two thirds.

Yet the IMF's own research is flawed.

The IMF admitted in 2012 they underestimated the negative impact of their measures, their prescription for crisis countries; and with the European Commission these flawed studies were used to demand damaging structural reforms for labour and the slashing of public debt.

But we have seen no recognition that these failed policies based on flawed data will be changed.

Yet inequality is growing with the majority of the world's poor now in middle income countries.

However while inequality is finally being recognised as a macroeconomic issue, the very tools of distribution - collective bargaining, minimum wages and social protection – all remain on the 'structural reform' hit list of international institutions, of big business and the governments they command.

We are proud of our Frontline publications. They show the devastation of the crisis on the lives of working people. They show that empirical evidence demonstrates that collective bargaining works and that minimum living wages and social protection are fundamental for reducing poverty and inequality.

Trend data from our Global Poll shows that in the past three years over half the world's population has not been able to save any money.

For 82 percent of people their wages are stagnating or not keeping pace with living costs.

With just over 3 percent global growth unemployment is set to rise again this year.

The G20 will fail again if it doesn't drive investment in jobs!

Jobs in infrastructure, in green economy in the care sector - in health, education, childcare, aged care and other vital public services.

Investment in jobs, wages and universal social protection, not just in developed countries but in all countries.

There is no other recipe for economic and social stability.

An economic agenda for women

We demand an economic agenda for women.

The employment of women is the fastest way to drive growth and productivity.

If women were in the workforce in equal numbers GDP would increase markedly - 4 percent in France, 8 percent in Japan and 34 percent in Egypt. And the jobs needed in the care economy to support participation adds more jobs.

So COUNT US IN - this Congress will mark our determination to support women's rights and equality.

How many affiliates have already signed up to the campaign ? Let's see those hands.

The message from women is clear - count us in to the workforce, count us into unions and count us into leadership.

Atook, a working woman in Indonesia says is all

“Our money, our wages are not enough to survive. Companies should respect women workers and pay a living wage – we are helping them make profits.”

Our advocacy for full employment demands that the post 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals must include Full Employment and Decent work along with universal Social Protection Floors as stand-alone goals. Please demand of your government that they do not settle for less.

We also support a goal for gender equality and free universal quality education also with the commitments necessary for affordable healthcare, sanitation and food water and energy security.

Peace and liberation in the Arab world

Brothers and sisters we can only express pride and solidarity for the liberation struggles in the Arab world. The ongoing struggle for peace, democracy and rights has our full support and we stand in awe of the courage of our colleague.

The images of people taking to the streets against dictatorships, beginning in Tunisia, is legendary.

The role of the UGTT is now dedicated to securing their constitution, a constitution that enshrines rights; A constitution that stands tall amongst all others and inspires us all.

It is fitting brother Abassi that for this the UGTT has been nominated for a Nobel Peace prize and you have our support.

APPLAUSE

We also support a new ITUC Arab sub-regional structure, a structure that will give collective voice to the unions fighting against state oppression of workers and for independent trade unionism, a structure that will work with both Africa and Asia.

Michael Sommer and other leaders have visited Palestine with me and witnessed first-hand the suffering.

The photo of these boys returning to their bombed out school on the visit we made to Gaza with the colleagues from the PGFTU and the region demonstrates the senseless cruelty.

The occupation of Palestine and the settlements in the West Bank must end. Palestine must be recognised as an independent state in line with our two state policy. We will not give up.

But we are also witnessing the breakdown in democracy and rights in countries like Turkey, Bangladesh, South Sudan and Korea, the escalation of conflict in Central Africa, in the Ukraine and more.

It is 100 years since WWI. Michael Sommer reminded the DGB Congress - never again war, never again fascism.

Peace and democracy must remain a focus for the ITUC

Then there is persistent state oppression against strikes and political protest in many nations. It is an unspeakable crime that in countries like Guatemala, Columbia and the Philippines where they still shoot trade unionists with impunity. We will continue to work with you to see these murderers prosecuted

Minimum Wages in Asia

Then we see countries like Cambodia where the employers attack on the right to strike in the ILO through the Committee on Application of Standards has been taken to the frontlines in the struggle for a minimum wage - where striking workers are shot and jailed and where police and military action are sanctioned by governments and supported by local employers.

We have seen similar oppression in Indonesia, Bangladesh and Haiti amongst many other countries.

We cannot and we will not stand silent while workers are impoverished through the supply chains of big business and attacked by their own governments

I hope we will have your support to take on this abusive corporate power and fight for minimum wages and social protection across borders in Asia and around the world.

We must shame the brands to pay a living minimum wage and support our affiliates to demand fair wage fixing mechanisms in their countries.

When on a pair of jeans the retailer receives 64 percent of the price and production workers 2 percent. This is pure greed.

Our own ITUC Global Poll tells us 94 percent of people want to strengthen international rules to make companies around the world provide better wage and labour conditions.

A minimum living wage and a social protection floor are the foundations of dignity and decent work.

Together we can win this fight everywhere!

ITUC Global Rights Index

We also have to continue the fight with the World Bank and its Doing Business Report.

This index is nothing short of a big business scam to get countries to impose neo-liberalism on themselves.

Doing business is best they say where employment protections and rights are weak.,

Doing business in this context is a crime against humanity.

Yet the world bank, the IMF, even sections of the UN defend and promote such.

We thought we fatally wounded the 'employing workers indicator' where freedom of association and collective bargaining rights are a tick against a country.

But they want to bring it back and we aim to fight fire with fire.

The ITUC has the most comprehensive database of both the lack of legal rights and rights violations in our survey. Today I launch a new index.

The Index is The ITUC Global Rights Index: The Worst Places in the World for Workers

These global hot spots are where workers rights are absent or not respected. It is based on exhaustive methodology.

There is now a global leaderboard in the race to protect workers' rights.

Where not to work is the counterpoint to the advocacy of big business to destroy the rights of workers. It is also a backbone for the global solidarity that our Countries at Risk program represents.

The export of the American corporate model

Employers have stepped up their anti - union attacks. The drive to export the American corporate model is global. The attacks on the European social model are deliberate, well planned and well resourced.

Like the IMF, the American Chamber of Commerce issues their policy prescriptions everywhere and they use the threat of capital flight.

From opposition to the minimum wage in Moldova to the opposition of collective bargaining in Romania to a demand for reduction in wages in Belgium! Even in Qatar they issued a statement saying the workplace deaths and injuries would not happen if workers took more responsibility!

On May Day we decided to name and shame some of the worst of this club of employers.

Have you voted yet for the worst boss in the world?

You can see the CEO of Qatari airlines has not shared his photo - he threatened to sue the ITUC for exposing him but he can't sue all of you so get your vote in - it's a hard choice but time is running out and we will announce the winner on Wednesday.

Their bullying knows no bounds. Take a look at what happened in the basement of a New York store.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTDfEVlv_XQ

This is the true story of the Harlem 7 – a group of workers who stood up to company oppression and voted to form a union.

We do expect better - the law expects better. This is a German company Deutsche Telecom's T-Mobile.

A German company that bargains with Verdi here, but uses fear and intimidation to keep their workplaces union free in the US.

Verdi and the CWA have a global union called T-UNION - the solidarity for American workers from Verdi and their members is extraordinary - Verdi and CWA delegates stand up!

We have a message for DT - we expect better and we don't give up.

Climate action – climate justice

The threats to jobs and livelihoods include the threat of climate change.

For unions it is simple. There are no jobs on a dead planet.

Despite our success in being recognised as a key player by negotiators,

Despite our success in having 'Just Transition' guarantees in the draft global agreement,

And despite the adoption of the first ever conclusions on the world of work and environment in the ILO, which provides a tripartite-agreed definition of Just Transition;

Governments have failed us.

We watched governments fail the planet and their people in Copenhagen and the same corporate interests want to see failure in a Paris.

We must mobilise for a global agreement in Paris and we must demand industrial transformation with the funding for a just transition for vulnerable nations and communities.

And there are jobs jobs and jobs. We did the research - 48 million new jobs in just 12 countries. You only have to look here in Germany to see the possibilities - 400,000 new jobs in renewable energy in just 2 years.

We are launching a global climate justice sign up right here at Congress.

Colleagues, Dorje Khartri, a great climate warrior, has died in a tragic accident, at work on Mount Everest.

Dorje was a leader of his Shepra's Union and Vice-President of GEFONT.

He was alarmed at the impact of climate change on his beloved mountain and he planted the ITUC flag on the top of Mount Everest to mark his pride in our fight for the climate.

He gave me his medal for this climb and today I dedicate it as a perpetual trophy for the Dorje Khartri Award for Union Action for Climate Justice.

The global union movement

Despite the challenges we are fighting back and we have victories to celebrate.

Throughout the week you will discuss many union successes even as you determine the next set of priorities. Here is just a taste;

Firstly Burma – Myanmar: our brother Maung Maung and his colleagues are back in Burma organising workers after a 24 year struggle in exile.

Secondly - domestic workers: A new convention, 125 affiliates campaigning, 15 ratifications + EU, 12 new unions 60,000 new members, 11 new laws and 3 collective agreements, the jobs of 12 million domestic workers formalised and union organised social protection in the Dominican Republic.

A collective bargaining agreement in an EPZ in Togo and others where they said there were no rights

Thousands of members in the nurses and transport unions in Swaziland despite the oppressive regime of the monarchy

A million street vendors in India unionised, the informal sector workers take their place in the executive in Ghana, mechanics operating legally with union support in Mali, ITUC mapping of waste pickers and energy workers to support organising campaigns and much more WITH standard setting for informal workers on the agenda of the ILO this year

A victory in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on violations of freedom of association in Chile –and the new president Michele Bachelet has already announced plans to prohibit the use of replacement workers during strikes.

ITF and UNI taking on DHL, winning in Turkey against the company's yellow union strategy and using the OECD guidelines to secure dialogue with DHL at the global level

IndustriALL and UNI securing the ACCORD in Bangladesh and supply chains on the agenda at the ILO for 2016.

Plado, the development platform for the Americas.

Tax justice: an FTT in Europe and the G20 to stop base erosion and profit shifting behavior of corporations so they pay tax where profit is earned.

The G20 endorsement of long term investments principles and the work of the committee on workers capital to get our pension investments out of the speculative economy these are a snapshot of just ten victories.

And the courage of leaders in the America to support the Auto Reforma programme designed to reduce fragmentation and promote union unity.

Qatar – a 21st century slave state

And then there is Qatar - thank you, all of you, thank you for your support in campaigning to end slavery.

Qatar, the richest nation on earth, is a slave state.

When a desperate worker leaves an Asian or African nation they have already been forced to pay illegal fees they can't afford. They arrive in Qatar to find their contracts are torn up and they are in a different job with far less money. They are forced to live in squalor, with poor quality food work 8, 10, 12 hour a day six sometimes seven day a week in extreme heat.

When they are desperate to leave they find themselves trapped in Qatar - workers owned and at the mercy of another human being - it is 21st century slavery. With no rights, 4000 workers could die before a ball is kicked in the 2022 World Cup. With the BWI and many of you we say to FIFA No World Cup in Qatar without workers' rights.

Congress 2014

Well Brother and Sisters the Vienna Congress marked the birth of the ITUC and a determination to build a new internationalism.

The Vancouver Congress saw a stronger global union movement map out broad and comprehensive policy priorities

And we have worked to develop a strategic planning framework to manage your demands framed by the objectives you will discuss and debate this week - the ambitions you all hold for

- union growth
- sustainable jobs, secure incomes and social protection
- realising rights

We have reformed the ITUC financial system to reflect our work, to make expenditure transparent.

2010 was a congress year and we put the decisions into ambitious plans with sound financial outcome.

In 2011 we made the planning process transparent and engaged affiliates in a more inclusive approach.

In 2012 we invested in building our voice. We created Equal Times; the ITUC global organising academy is building organising capacity, we developed the digital action centre, redesigned then countries at risk strategy and are taking on slavery with our Qatar campaign.

In 2013 we have been able to integrate these initiatives and we have invested the surplus to an earmarked organising fund.

I also take this opportunity to thank all our union donors sincerely - your contribution to the solidarity fund, to the countries at risk and much more is true solidarity.

And now Berlin. You called for a new interactive Congress structure. We have a Congress designed to look to the issues as a basis for action - for organising and union growth- for the research and advocacy that facilitates strategic organising around the issues that will make a difference to the lives of working people;

All our minutes, plans, activities and financial reports are published on the website.

So in conclusion,

The system is stacked against working people. Two-thirds of people think governments should do more to tame corporate power. We can be proud of being the strongest democratic force on the planet but we must do more.

We are only 7 percent organised and while with collective bargaining we secure wages and conditions for 9 percent of workers we can and must do more.

We must invest in union growth if we are to seriously take on the challenge to build workers power.

With affiliates and GUFs we are committed to this challenge in both the formal and the informal sectors of the economy.

Through the ITUC global Academy and we are training lead organisers in every region.

Our Regional Secretaries have posted reports on the congress website with an overview of their successes and challenges. They will introduce their region at Congress Live where leaders will give their speeches. Let me thank the Regional Secretaries for their stewardship.

None of this is possible without a team so can I record my gratitude to the president and the depict Presidents, the deputy secretaries and our dedicated staff. They are the best.

So can we do it?

Can we build workers power, increase our collective bargaining strength and grow the moment with another 20 million members by 2018?

Can we organise 20 million more workers?

Workers power, the power of collective voice, the power of the collective vote can take back our democracies, our workplaces, our rights. People want a more activist approach from their governments and have called for international action.

We have political power if we mobilise it. 42 percent of the world's population are voting in 2014. If we are organised and united we can change the world.

Building workers power means organising. In the sense of progressive governments we are the voice of opposition and we know we are the voice of progress.

This Congress is yours to make. We can and we will build workers power

Viva ITUC Viva