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Mr. Lee Myung-bak
President of the Republic
Blue House,
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HTUR/FW

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Anti-union practices after violently repressed strike

Dear Mr. President,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents more than 168 million workers through its 311 affiliates in 155 countries and territories, including your own, hereby vigorously protests at the anti-union practices faced by the Pohang Construction Plant Workers' Union (PCPWU), which is an affiliate of the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions (KFCITU).

The PCPWU represents workers that are employed at construction plants which are largely operated by subcontractors, but owned by POSCO, one of the major steel production companies of your country. On 1 July 2006, the union had engaged in a strike that ended after a collective bargaining agreement was signed between the union and the subcontractors' association on 20 September 2006.

The strike came at a high cost to the union, as it resulted in the death of its member and activist **Ha Joong Keun**. Furthermore, almost 200 members were injured as a result of the violent repression of the strike, and many of them had to be hospitalized. Moreover, almost 100 union members were arrested. Currently eight are still in jail after having been sentenced from two and a half to three and a half years for their role in the strike. With the exception of its former President **Lee Ji Kyung**, all union members are expected to be released in the course of this month.

Even though nearly two years have passed since Ha Joong Keun's death, the authorities still haven't assumed responsibility for it. Despite the union's calls, an impartial investigation into the killing has yet to materialise.

As you will remember, the collective bargaining agreement specifically stated that trade union members would not be discriminated against or barred from working in POSCO facilities. According to our information, however, the company management has been using its strong influence as a principal contractor to link union membership to



employment. Union members have been denied identification passes to POSCO facilities, and union members were told to resign from the union if they wanted to be or remain employed.

While running counter to POSCO's own Code of Conduct, which it adopted in June 2003, and according to which the company wants *"to implement corporate ethics that meet internationally accepted standards, thus making another bold step towards becoming a globally respected and trusted company"*, you will undoubtedly note with us that it also and above all constitutes a violation of both your own country's Industrial Labour Law 81, and of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention 87 on freedom of association.

We hereby urge you to ensure that a full and impartial investigation is launched into the death of PCPWU member Ha Joong Keun; that former PCPWU President Lee Ji Kyung is released from prison as soon as possible; and that workers are no longer forced to choose between employment and union membership, as this runs counter to international law. Much to our regret, Korea is still not fulfilling the commitments it made to the OECD and the ILO when it joined these world bodies, to respect core labour standards.

Looking forward to your swift reaction in this important matter,

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary