



INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

2nd WORLD CONGRESS

Vancouver, 21 - 25 June 2010

RESOLUTION

ON

ORGANISING

1. Congress affirms that the purpose of trade unions is to defend and advance the interests of workers, that this cannot be realised without the organisation of workers and that only through their own organisation can workers change the world of work, create a more just society, and fully realise decent work. By organising workers, trade unions enable them to be defended and represented and to have their views expressed in public affairs and collective bargaining. Equally, the ability of trade unions to serve their purpose depends on the strength, ability to mobilise and legitimacy that comes only from their membership.

2. Congress declares that there can be no substitute for genuine trade unions which are formed as freely chosen associations of workers through democratic participation. They cannot be replaced by advocacy groups, by employer or government dominated labour organisations, or by management driven Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

3. Workers seeking to form or join unions face daunting challenges and obstacles. Union organising is opposed through dismissals, harassment, intimidation, threats, surveillance, anti-union campaigns and even through physical violence. In many countries governments fail to protect the rights of workers seeking to unionise through inadequate legal protections, insufficient and delayed enforcement, biased judicial proceedings or weak, meaningless legal remedies. Some governments actively suppress trade unions through various means including encouragement of precarious employment relationships.

4. The falling level of trade union density in many countries is directly linked to the structural changes that have taken place in the global economy in recent years. Changing business relationships, changing technology and changes in the structure of economic activity as well as globalisation continue to have profound effects on the ability of workers to organise, to collectively bargain and so to protect their rights and fight for their interests. Changes in the world's workforce – which continues to become younger and more female – present further organising challenges as well as opportunities.

5. Globalisation and the organisation of business activity through international production and ownership relationships are increasing the need for international trade union cooperation over organising. Organising across borders and conducting international campaigns in close cooperation with the Global Union Federations is not

only an expression of solidarity but is becoming increasingly a condition for achieving results in trade unions' struggles.

6. Congress recognises that there is no greater challenge to the sustainability of strong trade unions than those concerning organisation and collective agreements. It is therefore imperative that all workers, regardless of location or employment status, enjoy the protection of a legal and institutional framework which guarantees their rights to freely and fairly choose representation and to engage in successful collective bargaining.

7. Congress deplores that large numbers of workers are effectively denied these rights because of the inadequacy of law or its application, which often does not cover the full range of relationships under which work is performed. Temporary workers, independent contractors, workers supplied by agencies, intermediaries or other labour brokers, domestic workers, agricultural workers, cross-border workers and workers in supply chains are often unable to exercise their rights in practice. Companies avoid the obligations that laws place on employers through contracting out work and by denying employment relationships. The growth of precarious work impedes organising; vulnerable workers are often reluctant to join trade unions even where they may have a right to do so. Where work is performed on an informal basis, as is the case for a majority of the workers in many developing countries, the right to organise and to collectively bargain is particularly difficult to realise.

8. In addition, the financialisation of the modern corporation, complex supply chains and the threat of relocation impact negatively upon the context and potential of collective bargaining. In many cases workers no longer have access to the real decision makers necessary for genuine bargaining, demonstrating the need for trade unions to work with the assistance of their relevant Global Union Federation to review new strategies that can enable them to make an impact.

9. Congress calls on affiliates to work for changes in the legal framework for trade union recognition and collective bargaining so as to enable more workers to join trade unions and to participate in genuine collective bargaining. The focus must be on ensuring that the right to form or join a trade union and the right to bargain collectively as defined in ILO Conventions 87 and 98 can be effectively realised for all workers whether in the public or the private sector, and includes providing trade union access to workers such as those employed in Export Processing Zones, who often lack social protection or redress for violations of their fundamental rights.

10. Congress calls on all affiliates to intensify their efforts to recruit more workers into trade union membership as an absolute priority. To this end they should adopt a full range of measures including reviewing existing priorities and resource allocations, promoting an organising culture, intensifying trade union education, increasing co-operation with other trade union organisations and reviewing their respective experiences with different organising approaches, informing the public widely about trade union activities, adopting targets for membership increase, and the development of new techniques and methods of organising through better planning and strategies.

11. Congress calls upon trade unions to meet the challenge of organising all workers within their respective jurisdictions without distinction as to employment status or educational and skill levels. That includes women, youth and migrants as well as those in atypical or precarious work relationships such as part time or temporary work. It includes highly educated workers performing new jobs that are rarely unionised just as much as those performing work in the informal economy and who are unregistered,

unrecognised and excluded, or who are in disguised employment relationships and may be wrongly defined as “self-employed”. Unions need all workers, and all workers need unions.

12. Congress stresses that it is only through the financial support of membership that the essential political independence of trade union organisations is possible, and emphasises the importance of strengthening financial support to the supranational trade union organisations including, first and foremost, the ITUC.

13. Congress declares that trade unions must change to adapt to new situations, and that such change is inevitable and necessary. Trade unions need to reflect the diverse and evolving needs and demands of working people. A trade union movement that can attract members must provide for participation, representation, diversity and gender mainstreaming. Trade union organisations must analyse their working methods and procedures to determine whether they should adjust their structures or create new ones to provide representation to all groups of workers, including the least privileged and those in informal working arrangements. The relationships between the various kinds of trade union organisations – national, regional and local, and industrial and enterprise - need to be adapted to ensure the democracy, autonomy and sustainability of a growing trade union movement where optimum resources for bargaining and organising are allocated.

ITUC Action Programme

14. Congress recognises that almost all areas of ITUC activity relate to organising and instructs the ITUC and regional organisations, working together with Global Unions partners and affiliates, to:

- (a) ensure that the importance of organising is reflected in all areas of their activities and that the relationship of organising to these activities is made clear;
- (b) work for the full application of the rights to organise and to collective bargaining for all workers according to the provisions of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 and their associated jurisprudence;
- (c) seek to strengthen and extend the scope of national legal and institutional frameworks where the rights of workers to form or join trade unions and the obligations of employers to recognise and to bargain collectively can be enforced;
- (d) specifically address organising issues arising out of the various relationships under which work is performed, in cooperation with Council of Global Unions Work Relationships Group, and by working to realise the provisions of Employment Relationship Recommendation No. 198 (2006) and the 2002 conclusions of the ILO general discussion on the informal economy;
- (e) undertake measures that promote environments conducive to forming or joining trade unions and to collective bargaining, including through the interventions of the ITUC at the level of international institutions such as the ILO and WTO;
- (f) work actively to stop dismissals and to secure the effective reinstatement of workers dismissed for organising or for other trade union activities and to ensure that sufficiently dissuasive sanctions are applied to prevent anti-union dismissals;
- (g) work for the ratification and application of all ILO Conventions with provisions that address obstacles to organising such as ILO Convention No. 135 (Workers'

Representatives in the Undertaking), Convention No. 151 (Labour Relations Public Service) and Convention No. 154 (Collective Bargaining);

- (h) provide solidarity support to assist trade unions in fighting international union busting and expose such practices;
- (i) promote the development of policies and activities to enable the organisation of atypical, vulnerable, informal economy and precarious workers, including both regular and irregular migrant workers and those performing work on an informal or unprotected basis, through a structured exchange of experience and information between trade unions within the ad hoc networks of the ITUC, global union federations and regional organisations and with the participation of other organisations where useful, and proposes that the secretariat undertake sufficient, substantial follow-up activities including an informal network of affiliates and global union federations to this end;
- (j) increase the public understanding of the problems facing workers performing work on an informal basis as well as expand the opportunities for these workers to organise, in general within the existing sectoral structures, so as to change their status and working conditions and ensure solidarity between workers in the same sector, whether in the formal or informal economy;
- (k) undertake capacity-building and other programmes to promote the democratic functioning of unions and their ability to organise and represent their members effectively, including the sharing of knowledge, materials and expertise between affiliates;
- (l) promote information and advocacy campaigns in order to raise awareness about the role of trade unions, popularise membership in trade unions and improve their image in the society;
- (m) continue targeted campaigns to encourage women, youth and migrants to join trade unions, as well as campaigns to reach other specific groups including the growing numbers of highly educated and skilled workers;
- (n) encourage the strongest linkages with unemployed and retired workers including, where appropriate, their organisation into trade unions;
- (o) provide, in close cooperation with Global Union Federations, solidarity to workers seeking to join or form trade unions or to conclude collective agreements including cross-border solidarity action and industrial action where feasible;
- (p) participate in coordinated and targeted international organising campaigns such as in Export Processing Zones or in activities directed at organising workers in specific supply chains;
- (q) assist Global Union Federations in developing closer relations between unions in multinational enterprises worldwide;
- (r) utilise international trade union cooperation over workers' capital to combat practices of anti-union discrimination and to assist organising in specific companies.