



2nd WORLD CONGRESS

Vancouver, 21 - 25 June 2010

RESOLUTION

ON

EXTENDING SOCIAL PROTECTION AND ENSURING GOOD OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. Congress asserts that social protection is a human right and an essential element of social justice. It provides dignity, lifting people out of poverty and reducing inequality through redistribution of wealth and is an investment in both productive capacity and in development, and must be considered a part of the responsibilities of government.
2. Congress deplores the fact that about 80% of the world population has no, or limited, access to social protection, reflecting a failure to recognise the essential role of public authorities in any efficient and fair market economy. Congress reiterates that social justice requires determined and effective state intervention.
3. Congress affirms its commitment to universal access to adequate social protection, with priority attention to be paid to those lacking access to basic social safety nets, including the unemployed and those in informal work, with particular regard to women and youth.
4. Congress underlines the primary role of the state in providing, facilitating, promoting and extending coverage of social protection. It further insists that benefits should be non-discriminatory, adequate and secure, and that the financial sustainability of social protection schemes must be assured. Trade unions and employers' organisations should be involved in their design and management. Social dialogue and tripartite participation, on an equal basis, are essential instruments for building a fair and effective consensus model.
5. Congress emphasises that ILO Convention 102 on Social Security (Minimum Standards) is the key international instrument in respect of social security, and reiterates its full support for its provisions addressing health care, family benefits, sickness, unemployment, old age, invalidity, employment injury, maternity, and loss of a breadwinner. It recognises however its outdated language on gender issues and calls upon Governments to implement its provisions on the basis of full gender equality.
6. Congress rejects the trend toward privatisation of social protection schemes and the decreasing involvement of the social partners in their management. Where private schemes do exist, workers' organisations should be involved in their governance, they should be complementary to public ones, they should integrate the principles of non-discrimination and redistribution and they should provide adequate benefits. Private funds must be properly regulated and subject to more stringent surveillance by public

authorities. Congress strongly advocates a return to public provision in light of the economic crisis and the failures of privatisation.

7. Congress deplores the current inadequacies in the coverage of social protection. Rising unemployment and informalisation and casualisation of work have left increasing numbers of workers with no or little protection. Where such informal and precarious work is the result of unscrupulous behaviour of employers it must be subject to stringent sanctions. Governments must bring workers engaged in informal activities within a legal framework in order to extend social protection coverage to them on a sustainable basis. And where there is no employer and the workers concerned must try to find a means of survival in the informal economy, they and their families must have access to social safety nets.

8. Congress is concerned by the erosion of the protection granted to atypical workers, such as temporary, part-time, contract or fixed term workers, in many countries. They should not be excluded from contributory social protection schemes on the basis of their employment status and must have equivalent entitlements to those of other workers. Public regulation and enforcement mechanisms need to be strengthened in order to ensure that atypical workers can benefit effectively from such rights.

9. Congress is concerned also about the financial constraints faced by many contributory and non-contributory schemes that place the adequacy of benefits under great pressure and deplores the general failure to devote sufficient resources to meet the new and growing needs for social protection brought about by globalisation.

10. Congress denounces the downward trend in levels of corporate taxation and wealth taxes and in tax payable on financial and speculative gains which have placed unacceptable constraints on public budgets. It calls for a fair division of fiscal responsibilities between capital and labour; progressive tax systems; and an end to international tax competition, tax evasion and tax havens. Increased fiscal space is a necessary condition for the extension of social protection. In many countries there is an urgent need to end inequitable tax exemptions and to reform regressive taxation systems, turning them into progressive models in which income tax becomes the primary source of revenue and reducing indirect taxes, which furthermore have a negative impact on consumption.

11. Congress recognises the particularly vulnerable position of women who often suffer from double discrimination, in both earnings and in social security entitlements. It is committed fully to promoting the principle of equitable outcomes in social security provisions and reaffirms its support for the elimination of the gender pay gap. Additional funds are needed to meet the social protection needs of the growing number of single-parent households around the world. Congress supports the recent G8/G20 commitments to the promotion of long life learning programmes and funding, which should be oriented particularly to old workers and women who want to be reinserted in the labour market.

12. Congress recognises the challenge of ageing populations for pension and health schemes but rejects privatisation and individualisation of schemes as a means to meet it. Congress reaffirms full support for pay-as-you-go systems and emphasises that any system should guarantee stable and predictable retirement benefits for current and future generations and build on collectivity and intergenerational solidarity. Increasing labour market participation rates and achieving full employment must be key elements of the policy response to ageing populations. Congress particularly rejects any pressure

from the World Bank or IMF to encourage governments to move to defined-contribution individual account pension systems.

13. Congress underlines that the disastrous consequences of the financial crisis on private pensions could have been mitigated had the benefits not been financed through an inappropriate reliance on capitalisation systems. In this light, it reiterates its strong opposition to defined-contribution schemes in which workers bear all risks on an individual basis. The individual capitalisation of pensions in the 1990's and 2000's has been a failure that, rather than providing wider coverage or guaranteeing decent pensions, has merely achieved the concentration of financial power and a profitable business for pension fund administrators, without any mechanisms for the participation of workers. Where defined contribution pension schemes are in place, these should contain more secure and appropriate investment options for those covered, to mitigate the financial risks. Financial education and awareness raising about pension issues should be provided, with trade union participation, to enhance knowledge about pensions among workers. Trade unions should also be active in different ways to promote lowering the administrative costs for the individuals covered by defined contribution pension schemes.

14. Congress further notes that many existing prefunded pension schemes do not respond to the needs of a great number of workers – particularly women workers - whose working lives are increasingly interrupted.

15. Congress demands that strict prudential rules be applied to the management of social protection funds, including pre-funded pension schemes where they exist. Tripartite involvement in the management of social protection funds needs to be promoted. Congress calls for a rechanneling of public funds so as to ensure adequate protection to all, and for the public sector to take responsibility for schemes that have collapsed.

16. Congress therefore supports the establishment and implementation of a minimum benefit package for all those in need, which would include: access to health care including maternity protection; family support to parents sending their children to school and regular medical checks; guaranteed old age pensions; income security for the disabled, as well as obstacle-free access to public services; and income support for particularly vulnerable groups for example through public employment guarantee schemes. A universal social floor would be financed mainly from public funds and would cover all men and women regardless of their employment situation. Congress urges governments to ensure that entitlement to a minimum benefits package be enshrined in national legislation as a fundamental right. It reaffirms its belief that benefit rates should be high enough to guarantee a standard of living above the poverty line. The poverty line and benefit rates should be set by reference to objective criteria and checked by independent authorities.

17. Workers' protection encompasses both social protection and workplace protection. Congress affirms that the right to decent, safe and healthy work is an inalienable right for all workers and a cornerstone of sustainable development.

18. According to figures from the ILO, each year there are around 2.2 million work-related fatalities, including over 100,000 deaths per year from exposure to asbestos alone, 270 million occupational accidents and 160 million work-related diseases. In economic terms, it is estimated that around 4% of GDP is lost globally owing to the direct and indirect cost of such accidents and illnesses. Workers from developing countries, where the accident rate has been increasing and work-related illnesses are a

scourge, have particularly serious conditions since many are working in dangerous sectors and activities such as agriculture, the timber industry, fishing and construction. Many earn their living through informal economic relationships, in which there is a total absence of any type of social protection and health and safety protection at work. The gender dimension of occupational health is a vital consideration, given the differing impact on men's and women's health and safety from exposure to toxic substances, and particularly in terms of the effect of exposure to biological agents on reproductive health. In addition there are repeated cases of violence and harassment at work. Furthermore, over 50,000 children under 14 are estimated to die annually from work-related accidents and illnesses. Immigrants form another vulnerable group since they are mainly employed to do the toughest and most dangerous forms of work in sectors with the highest levels of accidents, often with irregular status and a lack of respect for their most basic rights, starting with a serious lack of information and training.

19. Therefore, Congress calls on the ITUC to undertake campaigns to prevent workers' death, injury and illness from the effects of chemicals or dangerous substances such as asbestos and to ensure that workplace practices protect the reproductive health of women and men. It calls on all governments to ratify and apply the ILO conventions on health and safety at work, particularly ILO Convention No. 187 Concerning the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health. Congress stresses the need for governments to ratify ILO Convention No. 81, Labour Inspection and to strengthen the level and quality of public inspection systems in order to prevent violation of workers' rights and of occupational health and safety, provisions particularly in unprotected irregular jobs.

20. Congress encourages trade unions to promote the inclusion of occupational health clauses in collective bargaining. It recognises and supports the adoption of the Iberoamerican Strategy on Health and Safety at Work, which provides a model that can be extended to other regions, and calls on governments and employers' organisations to commit to developing it further and enforcing it via tripartite social dialogue.

ITUC Action Programme

21. Congress instructs the ITUC and regional organisations, working together with Global Unions partners and affiliates, to:

- (a) Encourage ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 102 in all countries;
- (b) Undertake activities to support affiliates in the area of social protection, through capacity building and other actions;
- (c) Advocate the approach to social protection set out in this resolution and work towards the construction of a comprehensive, fair, redistributive, universal social security model in which the state bears responsibility for guaranteeing protection for all workers, regardless of their employment status, geographical location or national origin, to create the foundations of the model of society all workers deserve;
- (d) Work with the ILO to campaign for the extension of social protection to all, for ratification of ILO social security conventions and for a basic social floor for all, including the adoption of an ILO Recommendation on the establishment of a social protection floor set at a level above the poverty line, and sufficient to provide reasonable living standards;

- (e) Develop programmes and initiatives to bring workers engaged in informal activities within a legal framework in order to receive social protection coverage on a sustainable basis;
- (f) Work for the improvement of occupational health and safety in all countries, including as relates to exposure to hazardous chemicals, psycho-social hazards and other occupational injuries and accidents, and respond to emerging challenges through the application of the precautionary principle;
- (g) Promote the ratification and enforcement of relevant ILO Conventions including ILO Convention 155, Occupational Safety and Health and ILO Convention No. 187, Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health, and the worldwide recognition of 28 April as the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers;
- (h) Promote the formulation of national health and safety programmes to elaborate targets, measures and mechanisms for advancing the prevention of occupational risks and the protection of workers' health, with the involvement of the economic and social partners;
- (i) Encourage the creation of information systems for registering and notification of accidents and illnesses and surveys on working conditions as a basis for drafting public policies and guiding priorities for preventative measures both generally and in the workplace;
- (j) Establish specific programmes for protecting the health of women facing occupational risks and that of the most vulnerable groups, particularly migrant workers;
- (k) Support activities to equip affiliated organisations with the capacities they need on occupational health and safety;
- (l) Undertake efforts to ban hazardous substances such as endosulfan and paraquat and to achieve a total world ban on the use and commercialisation of asbestos, in which regard Congress, meeting in Canada, makes a special appeal to the Canadian government to join a total world ban on asbestos.