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Commemorating the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action in the fight against racism, xenophobia and related intolerance

September 22, 2011

Statement by
the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC),
and Public Services International (PSI)

Ten years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Action Plan against racism, xenophobia and related intolerance, the ITUC, and PSI :

1. Fully support the organisation of this high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in Durban in 2001, and reaffirm the relevance of these instruments in the fight against racism and xenophobia;
2. Condemn the political instrumentalisation of all initiatives taken at international level regarding the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in Durban in 2001;
3. Deplore the poor political response at national and regional levels to implement the commitments made at international level and the lack of significant progress in the fight against racism and xenophobia;
4. Condemn the resurgence of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and racist and discriminatory acts against Roma people and insist that in most countries the largest number of incidences of racial discrimination and xenophobia are employment related;
5. State that there is a close link between the social and human consequences of the global economic and financial crisis and the resurgence of racism and xenophobia and condemn populist xenophobic talk that spreads hatred instead of promoting full and decent employment for all and quality public services;
6. Issue a reminder that workers belonging to national, ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities are overrepresented in precarious, poorly paid, difficult, dangerous and/or degrading work where freedom of association is often limited in law or practice;

7. Recognising that the Israel/Palestine conflict will inevitably be a significant issue at the Conference, reaffirm that moving decisively towards a solution to this conflict requires the coexistence of two independent, viable, sovereign states based on the full implementation of Resolution 242 (1967), which recognises the 1967 borders and United Nation's Security Council Resolution 338 (1973) and therefore support the application for membership to the UN of Palestine.

ITUC and PSI call on states:

1. To include the fight against racism and xenophobia within the framework of national and regional policies to promote decent jobs and to eradicate poverty. An effective fight against racism and xenophobia requires a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities;
2. To include the defence and protection of the rights of those directly or indirectly affected by racism and xenophobia among national priorities and to adopt a specific, clear, direct and determined approach to the fight against racism and xenophobia, including the establishment of the relevant institutional mechanisms and the allocation of adequate financial resources to achieve the goals.
3. To urgently implement the measures provided for in ILO Convention 111 concerning discrimination in employment and occupation. This Convention, ratified by 170 states provides the legal and practical measures for an effective fight against discrimination at work.
4. To implement the measures provided for in ILO Conventions 97 and 143 on migrant workers and the United Nations Convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families. These Conventions have not been widely ratified. Considerable efforts must be made to guarantee migrant workers' rights.
5. To implement public policies targeting women who belong to groups that are vulnerable to racism and xenophobia in order to fight against double discrimination based on gender and social identity.
6. To put in place mechanisms to assist victims of racial discrimination in the workplace and demand that the social partners adopt genuine equal opportunity and treatment policies. This is not just a question of rights but also of economic sense: racism in the workplace affects workers' confidence, morale, motivation and productivity.
7. To urgently reform asylum and immigration policies in destination countries which due to their repressive nature, undeniably exacerbate racial tensions. For the international trade union movement, it is essential that the importance of the contribution of migrant workers, ethnic minorities, coloured people and indigenous people's to society and their economies be highlighted and clearly understood.
8. To examine and strengthen existing labour laws to ensure that men and women from certain population groups who are vulnerable to racial discrimination are not disproportionately affected by unemployment and underemployment.