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President of the European Commission  
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HTUR/NT

Brussels, 12 November 2012

### **European Action and Solidarity Day – 14 November**

Sir,

In the name of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) which represents 175 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 308 national affiliates I turn to You in order to express the solidarity and the support of the ITUC, and of the workers there represented, with the European workers who will participate on the coming 14th of November in the European Action and Solidarity Day called for by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). By this I particularly refer to the workers in Spain, Portugal and Greece who, on that day, will follow the call of their trade union organisations for a general strike in their countries.

The austerity policies and structural reforms that the institution You preside are imposing for over three years now have proven to be a complete failure in economic terms, and have at the same time produced devastating effects in the social and working spheres. The objectives that supposedly justified them (the reduction of the levels of deficit and public debt and the financing of public debt at reasonable interest rates) have not been reached, but the situation is in some regards even worse than before their implementation. This derives from the fact that they have put Europe again on the path of a new recession, which is especially the case in the countries that have been subdued to rescue plans or to brutal budgetary cuts. This situation has even been acknowledged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), during its recent meeting in Tokio. Being aware of the risk that a new depressive vicious circle of the European economies would imply for the rest of the world, which would be dragged down with them, the IMF has asked for a change of course and to adopt effective measures that will foster growth and jobs.

The structural reforms that the European institutions are promoting are, in reality, just cuts in salaries, pensions and social allowances, as well as cuts in social, workers' and trade union rights, and an increased and unspecific tax burden through indirect taxation. The weakening of collective bargaining is being actively promoted, and social dialogue is being stripped of its content. Structural reforms and budget cuts of this reactionary nature, that are being pushed through against the opinion of the workers' representative organisations, are only creating more unemployment and precarious working conditions, a risky rise in poverty and inequality, a serious decline in fundamental public services like

education and healthcare, and a breakup of social and political cohesion in many European states.

The European Social Model, which has served as a model and reference for development and integration processes in many regions of the world, and which is one of the fundamental values of the European Union, is being deeply questioned by its political institutions. We can not understand this.

For all these reasons, we firmly encourage you to rectify these wrong and unfair policies and to promote others that foster economic growth and the creation of jobs. There are many tools for you at hand to solve the crisis of sovereign debt of your member states. We ask you to work for the persistence and the strengthening of the basic pillars on which the European Social Model is grounded, and to do this in dialogue with the social partners, especially with the trade unions. This is why we finally would like to ask you to give an impulse to the agreement on the proposal of a New European Social Contract that the ETUC has drafted.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B...', written in a cursive style.

General Secretary