



International Trade Union Confederation

May Day Statement, 2015

THE WORLD NEEDS A NEW BUSINESS MODEL

The world's GDP has trebled since 1980, yet inequality is at historic levels. The neglected, too often hidden workforces of the richest companies in the world, have no job security and work long hours for poverty wages, very often in unsafe environments or with unsafe products.

The world has reached a tipping point. Sixty per cent of global trade is now driven by big business which, without apology, uses a business model based on exploitation and abuse of human rights in supply chains. People at home or abroad mean nothing to the heads of major corporations from the US, China, Korea or other centres of economic power.

When CEOs of major companies know their profits are driven by low wage levels that people cannot live on; profits that risk safety with indefensible workplace injuries and deaths; profits from polluting community land and water and profits that are used to lobby Governments against the rule of law that would hold them to account – this is a business model based on corruption.

Working people and their families have had enough. Ninety-four per cent of people want the guarantee of labour rights as a foundation for global trade. Ninety-four per cent of people want stronger rules to hold corporations accountable for better wages and conditions. Eighty-eight per cent of people want minimum wages lifted around the world.

Corporate greed is on trial on 1 May 2015, and working people find the business model of today morally bankrupt.

We petition world leaders to implement and enforce the rule of law. If every nation held its big corporations responsible for their business conduct at home and abroad, we could end corporate greed and put the global economy to work for the many rather than the richest one per cent.

If governments defend strong labour market institutions that ensure fair distribution of wealth through minimum living wages and collective bargaining – based on the fundamental guarantee of freedom of association – we could reduce inequality and end corporate greed.

And if governments prioritise the dignity of the social protection floor for their people – the basic income and the public services that ensure sustainable and peaceful communities – the endless race to the bottom would stop and we could rebuild economic justice.

Labour is not a commodity. This is the principle at the very heart of the Constitution of the ILO and the international rule of law, yet the world's workforce of 2.9 billion people is increasingly seen by major corporations as just that – a commodity that guarantees the wealth of a privileged few.

The gains made by the world's working women and men in the 125 years since the first May Day mobilisations are under threat as never before.

On this May Day, working people demand an end to insecure and unsafe work. We demand that companies be made to stop cheating on tax, that they join the fight against climate destruction and that they end the practice of hiding their real workforce through myriad contracts and business deals. We demand an end to poverty wages, informal and forced labour and we demand for all workers the dignity of freedom of association and collective bargaining.

We call on governments to stand up to the corporate bullies, to use the rule of law to guarantee that all people are protected from exploitation and allowed to build a future for themselves and for future generations.

We are united in our determination to end corporate greed.