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PRESIDENT
PRÉSIDENT
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PRESIDENTE

SHARAN BURROW
GENERAL SECRETARY
SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRALE
GENERALSEKRETÄRIN
SECRETARIA GENERAL

Prime Minister of Georgia
Bidzina Ivanishvili
Chancellery of the Government of
Georgia
Ingorokva Street, 7
Tbilisi
Georgia 0105

PERC/GG/km

Brussels, 14 November 2012

Workers' Rights in Georgia

Dear Prime Minister,

The International Trade Union Confederation, representing 175 million workers from more than 150 countries has for years been closely monitoring the situation with regard to workers' rights in Georgia supporting the activities of its Georgian affiliate – the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC).

As you will be well aware, Georgia is severely criticised for systematic violations of fundamental workers' rights, in particular, the right to organise and to bargain collectively, as enshrined in Conventions 87 and 98 of the International Labour Organisation. Georgian labour code does not protect against discrimination, moreover, it invites union busting and it puts workers at the mercy of their employers. There is no labour inspection in the country that could protect workers from unlawful employers' actions, and trade unions are systematically oppressed by the government – lawful strike was suppressed by the police at the Herkules plant, trade union leaders received threats from officials, the ministries openly tried to interfere in trade union affairs. All these facts were duly recorded and submitted by us to the international institutions - the ILO, the EU, and the Council of Europe – and our concerns were shared. However, the previous government, instead of remedying the situation, preferred exchanging the rights of Georgian people for transnational business interests. The ILO attempts to mediate proved fruitless as the government was clearly not interested in making any changes.

The victory of the Georgian Dream coalition over the radicals of President Saakashvili's team brought hope to the Georgian workers that their rights would be respected. The recent wave of strikes and protest actions, particularly, in the private sector, shows that Georgian workers are fighting for dignity and respect, for decent working conditions and salaries, and that employers can no longer enjoy total freedom in their treatment of workers which the previous government installed and promoted.

We have also been informed by the GTUC President, Irakliy Petriashvili that at your meeting with civil society organisations these issues were raised and discussed with you and that you shared the concerns of the Georgian unions. We see this as a positive signal that Georgia will implement necessary labour reforms to make sure workers' rights are respected in the country, in dialogue with the GTUC. Social dialogue is the key instrument to ensure sustainability and stability of industrial relations and the role of a strong trade union movement is vital for this. The ITUC

and its affiliates will continue to support the GTUC and its work and we count on constructive relations with your government.

In the enclosed roadmap that the ITUC and the ETUC have prepared, you will find detailed documentation about the wrongdoings of the previous administration and our recommendations for the necessary steps Georgia must take to improve the situation.

The ITUC Deputy General Secretary will be in the country on 22 November and we hope that this will provide an opportunity to further discuss the necessary reforms with representatives of your government. Implementation of the reforms would not only address the interests of Georgian citizens, it would normalise the industrial relations processes in the country and it will also improve Georgia's international reputation.

Yours sincerely,

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

General Secretary