



# Global Solidarity News

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## **Solidarity Committees**

The Solidarity committees (NI and ROI) continue to be the vital link between Congress and affiliates on solidarity issues. These committees work closely with the Global Solidarity Project to ensure that it reaches affiliated unions of Congress and meet regularly during the year. They continue to act as a link between the project, their individual union, and the membership.

These Committees encourage affiliates to engage with the project and looks to embed solidarity linking within trade union structure.

Some affiliates (NIPSA, IMPACT, PSEU and ESBOA) have formed their own structures to engage with international solidarity issues.

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Congress would like to acknowledge the continued support of Irish Aid for our Global Solidarity work.

# Welcome

## **Congress' Global Solidarity project 2008 - 2011**

Irish Congress of Trade Unions continues its Global Solidarity project. Thanks to Irish Aid that granted Congress' application for the project 2008 - 2011, the Global Solidarity issues are ensured to be high up on the trade union agenda.

The goal of Irish Aid is to contribute towards the achievement of the international development targets to halve the proportion of the world's population living in abject poverty by 2015. Irish Aid has also demonstrated through the development of the relationship with Congress that partnerships with trade unions can strengthen poverty reduction efforts, while simultaneously strengthening union organisation in developing countries.

The aim of the ICTU Global Solidarity programme is to equip the Trade Union movement with the knowledge and skills:

- To raise awareness of the Global Solidarity issues amongst our members by creating our own Trade Union development education in Ireland
- To strengthen our international trade union solidarity work, promote development worldwide and generate an understanding of our global interdependence.
- To play a key role in raising public awareness of the causes of exploitation, world poverty and climate change, as well as the need for progressive solutions.

Global Solidarity Newsletter gives some examples of the concrete international solidarity work that is developing within the Irish trade union movement. In this issue you can for example read about our work in solidarity with the trade union movement in Lesotho and Colombia.

Global Solidarity Newsletter is published twice a year. But if you want to have up to date information we recommend our re-vamped website:

<http://www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org/>



## Fair Trade/Trade Union Conference

ICTU and IUF (International Union of Food workers) co-organised a Fair Trade/Trade Union conference 18-19 September in Dublin.

The main objective was to solve some conflicts and problems which have appeared in some Fair Trade plantations, especially in Latin America, where the right to form independent trade unions have not been fully respected.

The 20 participants came from trade unions in Latin America, Africa and Asia, as well as number of European trade unionists and representatives from Fair Trade. The conference was very successful and achieved its goals.



## 17th October - Eradicate Poverty

Members from ICTU Global Solidarity were among the hundreds of people gathered at the famine memorial at Custom House Quay in Dublin the 17th October. The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, a UN-designated day, is aimed at highlighting the struggles faced by poor people across the globe.

A commemorative stone by Irish artist Stuart McGrath was unveiled a few metres from the famine memorial, engraved with the words of French anti-poverty campaigner, Joseph Wresinski. It reads: "Wherever men and women are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights are respected is our solemn duty."

300,000 people in Ireland are living in consistent poverty. This means they are deprived of basic necessities, such as adequate heat, food and clothing. Over one-third of those living in consistent poverty are under 16.

## Irish Aid - ILO partnership programme

The official launch of the third phase of the Irish Aid-International Labour organization partnership programme was held in Irish Aid volunteering center in Dublin the 4th November. It was also the official opening of the Irish Aid and ICTU sponsored exhibition of photographs on the subject of "Ethiopian women with disabilities at work"

David Begg General Secretary of ICTU and Turlough O'Sullivan Director General of IBEC took part in the official launch. ICTU, IBEC and Irish Aid, jointly agreed to support International Labour Organisation programmes aimed at increasing the opportunities for women's entrepreneurship while including the disabled in business and combating forced labour and child labour in the developing world.

Mr Begg said in his speech that "the annual budget for development aid across the world was €103 billion or one-seventh of the cost of the rescue package for financial institutions in the United States. What could be achieved", he asked, if there was "such a worldwide consensus on what must be done to tackle poverty?"

## Would you like to become a Global Solidarity Champion?

ICTU's development education project aims to identify and train 30 trade union members to become Global Solidarity Champions 2009. A dedicated training course will provide you with the knowledge, skills and tools to carry out your role as a Global Solidarity Champion in your trade union.

### The specific learning outcomes will be:

- > to understand the difficult situation for trade unionists in various countries around the world, and how to act in solidarity with them.
- > to recognize the importance and role of the international trade union movement as well as the International Labour Organisation and core labour standards.
- > to understand the root causes of climate change, world poverty and the huge inequalities in our world.
- > to know about the strength of the international trade union movement, and how solidarity contributes to the work for justice and equality in the world.

### A Global Solidarity Champion will after the course be equipped to:

- > Contribute to strengthen the international solidarity work and development education within his/her own trade union
- > Work with his/her trade unions solidarity committee, or if it does not exist try to create one.
- > Take part in the future work of the Global Solidarity project.

If you are a member of an affiliated trade union and you want to get involved as Global Solidarity Champion you can contact:

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# Lesotho



Lady weaving with her grandchild works for Setsotho Designs, she is caring for this child, her daughter has died. Photo: Eileen O'Leary

## Lesotho facts

**Full name:** The Kingdom of Lesotho

**Population:** 2 million (UN, 2007)

**Capital:** Maseru

**Area:** 30,355 sq km (11,720 sq miles)

**Major languages:** Sesotho, English

**Life expectancy:** Christianity

43 years (men), 42 years (women) (UN)

**Monetary unit:** 1 loti (L) = 100 lisente

**Main exports:** Clothing, wool, mohair, food, livestock

**GNI per capita:** US \$1000 (World Bank, 2007)

***The Kingdom of Lesotho is beautiful country made up mostly of highlands where many of the villages can be reached only on horseback, by foot or light aircraft.***

Much of the tiny country, with spectacular canyons and thatched huts, remains untouched by modern machines. Resources are scarce - a consequence of the harsh environment of the highland plateau and limited agricultural space in the lowlands. So, Lesotho has been heavily dependent on the country which completely surrounds it - South Africa. Over the decades thousands of workers have been forced by the lack of job opportunities to find work at South African mines. The former British protectorate has had a turbulent, if not particularly bloody, period of independence with several parties, army factions and the royal family competing for power in coups and mutinies. The position of king has been reduced to a symbolic and unifying role. Lesotho has one of the world's highest rates of HIV-Aids infection. Poverty is deep and widespread, with the UN describing 40% of the population as "ultra-poor". Food output has been hit by the deaths from Aids of farmers. Economic woes have been compounded by the scrapping of a global textile quota system which exposed producers to Asian competition. Thousands of jobs in the industry have been lost.



Boy holding a lamb is in the village of Ha Maputsoe. Photo: Eileen O'Leary

## ***Congress supports the Lesotho trade unions.***

A trade union capacity building project for Lesotho has been developed by ICTU in collaboration with Lesotho Congress of Democratic Unions (LECODU). The overall aim is to build and capacitate a strong trade union organisation as well as addressing issues of HIV/AIDS. As much as 24% of the population in Lesotho is infected.

The project will ensure that the leadership of LECODU are skilled and enabled to address the following areas: Organising and campaigning, negotiation and collective bargaining, educating and sensitisation in all aspect of trade union work, including the HIV/AIDS issue.

A large number of women will be ensured to participate in the capacity building. The largest industry in Lesotho is the garment sector, where women constitute the majority of the workforce. Women in the communities also take on far more responsibilities than men when it comes to caring and looking after those living with HIV/AIDS.

Thanks to Irish Aid that granted a Congress application, the project started up in August 2008 and it will run for one year. The ICTU affiliated unions IMPACT and PSEU have also made important financial contributions to realise this trade union international solidarity project.

# Colombia



Barrancabermeja, one of the most violent cities in Colombia. Photo: Voeten t / ILO

**At eight o'clock in the morning on the 8th of August last, while most of the world's attention was on the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, Luis Prada was walking to work. Luis worked in a clothes shop in the town of Saravena in the east of Colombia where he lived with his wife and five children.**

As he neared his shop a man walked up to Luis and shot him 17 times in broad daylight before fleeing on a motorcycle with an accomplice.

Luis was the third member of his family to be assassinated. He had spent most of his life living under death threats, forced to move home on numerous occasions.

In the minds of his killers, Luis' crime was that he was a member of the Colombian Trade Union Federation.

Luz Maria Diaz Lopez was a teacher at a rural school in Putumayo. She was seven months pregnant when she and her colleague Emerson Ruales were shot dead as they made their way to work. Both victims were members of the local teacher's union.

Jose Martinez sold lottery tickets for a living. At ten o'clock on the night of the 23rd of August he was shot dead by unknown gunmen. Jose was also President of the Colombian National Lottery Worker's Federation and a leading campaigner against proposals to privatise Colombia's national lottery.

He was the 38th trade union member to be assassinated in Colombia this year and the third in the month of August.

Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world to carry a union card. 39 trade unionists were killed 2007. None of the killers has been charged or sentenced.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) puts the conviction rate for the murders of trade union members in Colombia at 1% and as trade unionists in Colombia puts it, "To be a trade unionist in Colombia is to walk with a gravestone on your back."

It is high time for the world to act. The crimes against human and trade unions rights in Colombia have to stop. The perpetrators, who kill and terrorise the trade unionists, have to be punished. The Colombian government must be pressurised to respect core labour standards and the UN declaration of human rights.

**"To be a trade unionist in Colombia is to walk with a gravestone on your back."**

## ICTU: EU must put pressure on Colombia!

ICTU's General Secretary David Begg has, in a letter to Tánaiste and Minister of Trade Mary Coughlan, demanded that Ireland should act against the proposal that Colombia should receive continued preferential trading status from EU. David Begg declared that "Colombia has to be in full compliance with the core labour standards as a condition for the extension of the preferential trade agreement."

Classified as a developing country, Colombia has received preferential trading status from the EU for many years under a scheme known as the General System of Preferences (GSP).

In 2005 the scheme was changed to a system called GSP plus. This new system provides additional benefits for countries that qualify, but, crucially, requires them to ratify and "effectively implement" a series of core international conventions on human and labour rights. These include:

- The prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour (ILO convention 182)
- Freedom of association and protection of the right to organise (ILO convention 87)
- The right to organise and bargain collectively (ILO convention 98).

Colombia has ratified these conventions but has patently failed to implement them. Colombia is also the most dangerous place in the world for trade unionists to operate. If EU really means that human rights have to be respected, Colombia should not be given any preferential trading status.

## Breaking news!

The European Commission's decided 15th December to grant additional GSP trade benefits to Colombia.

***"The list of beneficiaries of the EU's GSP plus system over 2009 to 2011 includes some of the world's worst violators including Colombia, Guatemala and Georgia," said ICTU General Secretary Guy Ryder. "Colombia should only have received benefits in exchange for guaranteed progress in terms of its compliance with internationally-recognised core labour standards."***

## Justice for Colombia

The Vice Chair of ICTU's Global Solidarity Committee Mick Dowling from SIPTU, took part in the assembly of the Colombian Coalition of Social Movements (Comosoc) in mid October which was held in Bogota. Comosoc forms together with the trade unions the most important force for democracy, progress and peace in Colombia.

Liam Craig Best from Justice for Colombia in Britain was invited to the Global Solidarity committee meeting 4th November to inform, along with Mick Dowling, about the extremely difficult situation for trade unions in Colombia.

The committee decided to develop the solidarity work for the Colombian trade union movement, and we have now established our own Justice For Colombia branch in Ireland

Justice for Colombia (JFC) is an NGO that campaigns for human rights, workers' rights and the search for peace with social justice in Colombia. Established in 2002 by a group of British trade unionists, JFC was created in response to the appalling human rights crisis in Colombia.



Miners looking for Emeralds, Muzo, Colombia. Photo: Moleres, F / ILO

### The four key aims of Justice for Colombia are:

- 1 To provide concrete support to trade unions and other civil society organisations in Colombia in their struggle for human and trade union rights
- 2 To campaign against the systematic human rights abuses carried out against trade unionists and other civil society activists in Colombia and to highlight the regular collusion between the Colombian state security forces and illegal paramilitary groups and the impunity which the perpetrators benefit from.
- 3 To support and promote a peaceful politically negotiated settlement to the conflict in Colombia.
- 4 To insist that UN and ILO conventions and recommendations are implemented in Colombia in both law and practice.

You can read more on; <http://www.justiceforcolombia.org>

Do you want to join the work of the Irish branch of Justice For Colombia? Please contact ICTU Global Solidarity Office.

## Trade Union rights in the World

The International Trade Union Confederation has recently released its annual survey of violations of trade union rights. The survey gives an overview of the trade union rights situation in the world in 2007 and of the major violations that took place. In many cases they had fatal consequences. This Survey is also intended as a tool. It illustrates good practice in cases where improvements are recorded.

The most tragic consequences of anti-union actions are still the alarming numbers of murders, abductions, arrests and imprisonments, as well as acts of discrimination and intimidation against trade unionists, which continued unabated in 2007. The list of worst offending countries in terms of anti-union violence and repression is getting longer rather than shorter. The long-standing notorious cases of Colombia, Burma, Belarus, Sudan, Swaziland and the Philippines have been joined by Zimbabwe, Guinea, Pakistan, Nepal and Honduras, where serious and persistent violations were worse in 2007 than before.

Read more: <http://survey08.ituc-csi.org/>

# World Day for Decent Work

## The campaign continues...

On October 7 unionised workers all over the world marked the inaugural World Day for Decent Work. The campaign day was organised by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to which Congress is affiliated. 216 ITUC affiliated unions arranged 616 different activities in 130 different countries. Several hundred thousand people took part in meetings, public rallies, marches and demonstrations.

The idea behind the campaign is simple: every person on earth is entitled to a job that delivers a fair wage and allows people to enjoy a good life provide for themselves and their families.

The key themes for the Decent Work agenda are:

**Rights at Work** Including the fundamental rights to organise and bargain collectively, to be free of forced labour, along with the right to a safe and fair workplace

**Solidarity** Building links between peoples and providing support to others in time of need

**Ending Poverty & Inequality** To put sustainable and equitable global development at the heart of everything we do.

The international trade union movement is working for a New Globalisation that will operate for the benefit of the mass of people and act to raise standards the world over, reversing the race to the bottom we have seen over the last decade.

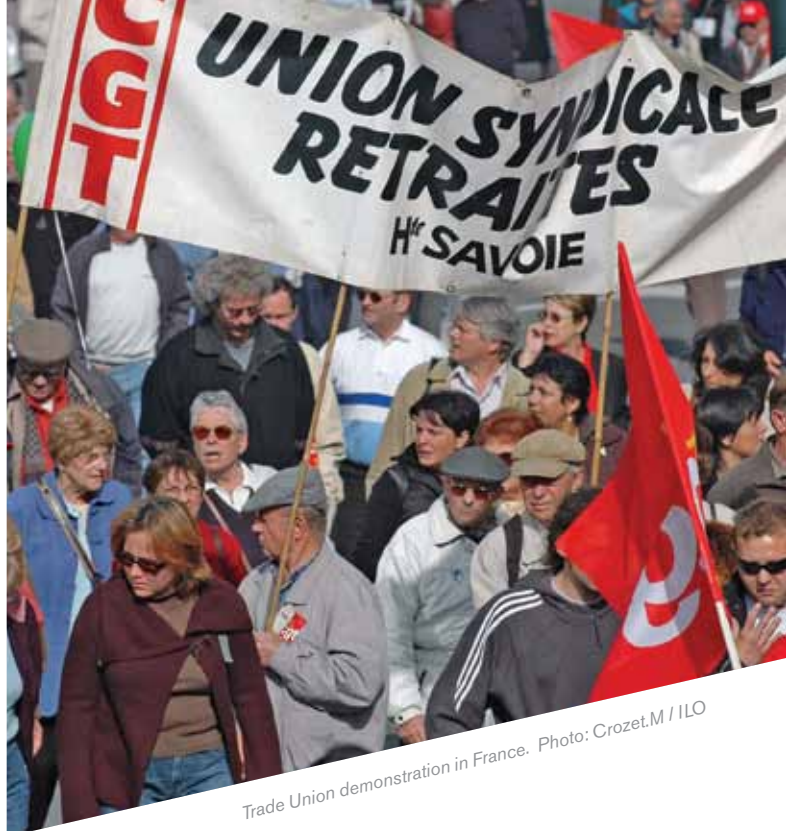
In today's global economy 85 million young people are unemployed and the vast bulk of the employment opportunities available to them are informal and offer poor protections. Over 12 million people are still trapped in 'forced labour'.

More than 1.5 billion people earn less than two dollars a day, with women earning far less than their male counterparts. Women also comprise the majority of workers employed in the informal sectors.

Every year, in excess of 100 trade unionists are killed for the 'crime' of trying to organise their fellow workers. Thousands more are tortured, countless numbers are dismissed or face workplace victimisation for trade union activities.

Bad work practices and unsafe workplaces kill more than 2.2 million people every year.

The World Day for Decent Work 7th October marked the importance of all these issues, but the campaign for Decent Work has to continue all days all over the world.



Trade Union demonstration in France. Photo: Crozet.M / ILO

## Norway in the forefront for Decent Work.

*The Norwegian Government has established a strategy in seven action points to strengthen and coordinate Norway's efforts in promoting workers' rights abroad. The strategy will serve as a supplement to the efforts against social dumping at home.*

The International Labour Organisation's "Decent Work Agenda" is the basis for the Government's increased effort. As a first specific measure of the strategy, Norway's financial contribution to the ILO will be increased from 2009.

The strategy is to be further formulated and developed in cooperation with the Social Partners through the Norwegian ILO Committee, says Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, Mr. Dag Terje Andersen.

The strategy shall be based upon the following seven action points:

- 1 Norway will strengthen its efforts to promote worker's rights on a global level.
- 2 Norway's policy vis-à-vis the ILO will be further developed.
- 3 Promotion of worker's rights in other countries will be given a higher priority in the fields of foreign policy and development aid policy
- 4 Also when it comes to trade policy, Norway will be a driving force in the work to promote decent working conditions, inter alia in bilateral trade agreements and in multinational and regional agreements.
- 5 Ensuring workers' rights in other countries shall be an important aspect of the Government's industrial policy and in the Government's efforts to make Norwegian companies assume social responsibility.
- 6 A special effort will be made to strengthen the verification and enforcement of laws and regulations concerning labour standards.
- 7 Norwegian experiences will be utilized to improve working environment monitoring in other countries.

ICTU Global Solidarity believes that many governments in the world, including the Irish Government, can learn from Norwegian example.

# Cuba

## **Cuba needs your support now!**

The 2008 Hurricane Season has caused severe damage in Cuba. Therefore the Executive Council of Congress has decided to start an All Ireland Trade Union Campaign to support the Cuban people's efforts to rebuild their country.

The Cuban authorities and popular organizations made tremendous efforts and succeeded to evacuate more than 2.5 million people, almost a quarter of the population, from the paths of the hurricanes. Thanks to this exemplary model of civil defense and preparation only seven lives were lost. No one suffered from thirst, hunger or lack of medical attention during the critical days.

But the four hurricanes that hit Cuba in just three weeks are the worst natural disasters for this island nation since 1963. Half a million houses destroyed, major factories, schools, telecommunications, hospitals, government buildings and farms have been severely damaged. The agriculture sector is also harshly hurt, as much as 70% of this year's food production is lost.

Cuba needs international solidarity to overcome this crisis. Countries like Mexico, Brazil and Spain have made important contributions to fight the food shortage. Even small and poor countries like East Timor and Trinidad and Tobago have sent 1,5 million US \$ to help to rebuild homes.

Congress has organised an All Ireland fundraising campaign for Cuba. We will concentrate our resources to help one of the worst hit regions, Pinar Del Rio. All collected monies will be directly transferred to the relief and reconstruction fund used for that region. The monies will be used for reconstructions of homes, schools and hospitals.

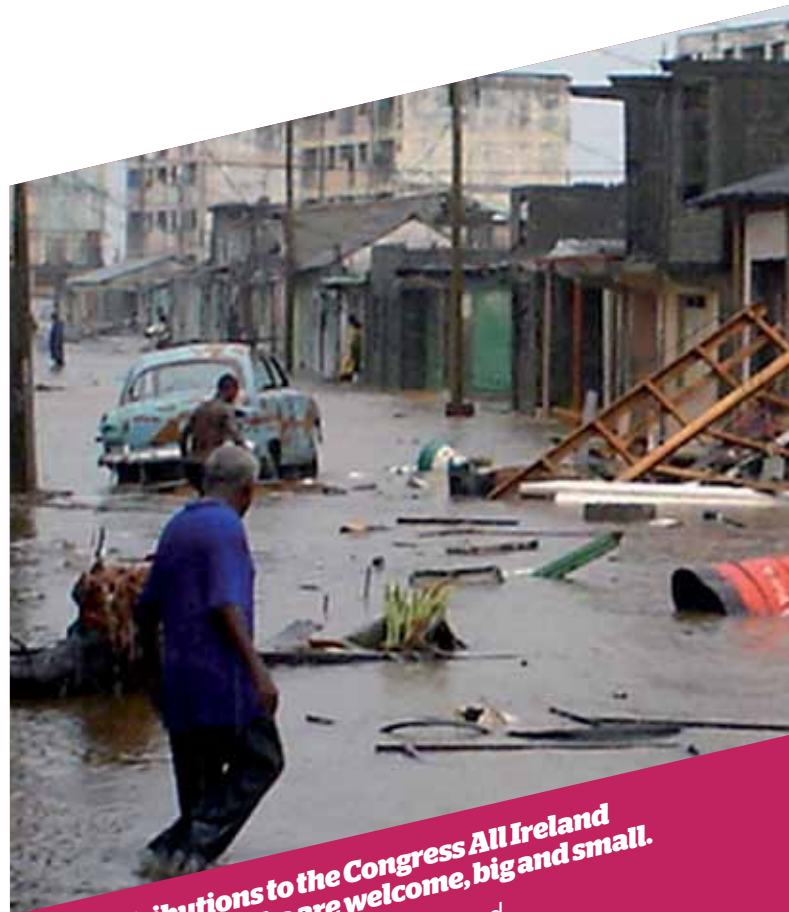
**Now it is  
time for  
Ireland  
to act**



Photo: John Chaney

## **CWU contribution to Cuba**

Communication Workers Union National Executive Council decided to present €10,000 to the Hurricane Relief Fund. The Ambassador of Cuba Noel Carillo receives here the symbolic cheque from General Secretary Steve Fitzpatrick.



**All contributions to the Congress All Ireland fundraiser for Cuba are welcome, big and small.**

Send your donations to Bank of Ireland,  
Ballsbridge Branch, Dublin 4.  
Account name: ICTU no. 2  
Sort code: 90 09 73

Account no: 89 95 57 85

**For cross-border payments, please use:**

BIC: BOFIE2D

IBAN: IE08 BOFI 9009 7389 9557 85

# Banking Crisis & Recession – What To Do?

## **1. What happened?**

*Questions posed to Walden Bello, a senior analyst at the Bangkok-based research and advocacy institute Focus on the Global South.*

### **Did greed cause the collapse of global capitalism's nerve center?**

Good old-fashioned greed certainly played a part. This is what Klaus Schwab, the organizer of the World Economic Forum, the yearly global elite jamboree in the Swiss Alps, meant when he said in an interview earlier this year: "We have to pay for the sins of the past."

### **Was this a case of Wall Street outsmarting itself?**

Definitely. Financial speculators outsmarted themselves by creating more and more complex financial contracts like derivatives that would securitize and make money from all forms of risk – including such exotic futures instruments as "credit default swaps" that enable investors to bet on the odds that the banks' own corporate borrowers would not be able to pay their debts! This is the unregulated multi-trillion dollar trade that brought down AIG.

### **Was it lack of regulation?**

Yes. Everyone acknowledges by now that Wall Street's capacity to innovate and turn out more and more sophisticated financial instruments had run far ahead of government's regulatory capability. This wasn't because the government was incapable of regulating but because the dominant neo-liberal, laissez-faire attitude prevented government from devising effective regulatory mechanisms.

(Read more <http://www.stwr.org>)

## 2. What has to be done?

### ***The International Trade Union Confederation comments on the banking crisis (from a press statement 30/9 2008)***

- Resolving the financial crisis must go hand in hand with concerted international action to stimulate jobs and growth so that the imminent danger of world recession is averted, and economies are launched on paths of just and sustainable development.
- The essential task of regulating financial markets, so as to shut down the option of a return to business as usual and a repetition of today's debacle must be one component of a wider agenda to reshape the management of the global economy.
- The imbalances which have seen real wages fall or stagnate, at the same time as capital has reaped record profits, need to be redressed. Organising and bargaining rights, recognized internationally, must be enforced universally so workers can have real influence over their lives and their futures.

(Read more on <http://www.ituc-csi.org/>)

### ***European Trade Union Confederation (from a statement 14/10 2008):***

Europe and its governments need to act not only urgently but also as one. A systemic crisis calls for a systemic policy response.

- Save Europe from the financial profiteers: a European Recapitalisation Fund injecting new capital in the banking sector, thereby also avoiding the danger of national governments leaving the rescue of cross-border multinational banking groups to other governments, hence to no one. A full re-regulation of financial markets so that they function in the interest of the public good.
- Save the real economy from casino capitalism: a European Investment Fund to promote investment in renewable energies, energy savings, innovation and European infrastructure networks. Growth driven by bubbles and speculation needs to be replaced with green investment as a new and sustainable driver for European demand.
- Save wages from the central bankers: a total overhaul of the European Central Bank's (ECB) policy model. The ECB's crusade against wages is misguided and has to stop. The model of monetary policy-making needs to be completely overhauled. Inflation cannot be the only needle of the compass. The ECB also needs to take into account the Treaty mandate of pursuing economic growth, high employment and social cohesion.
- Ensure that monetary policy focuses not only on past inflation but also on where the real economy is headed. A Supervisory Board comprising representatives of the European social partners and the members of the European Central Bank's Executive Board has to be put in place.

(Read more <http://www.etuc.org>)

# Global Solidarity

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