

Kevin Callinan for Summer School 2018

Welcome to our 10th Annual ICTU Global Solidarity Summer School – the first in Derry and it is a pleasure to be here in the City Hotel.

Since we gathered in Wexford last year, much has happened and I want to spend a short while summarising some of the work that yourselves and Congress have been involved in over the past 12 months and indeed some of the successes this has included.

First can I congratulate my Fórsa colleague, Joan McCrohan on her election as chair of the Congress Global Solidarity Committee last September. And indeed, Yvonne O'Callaghan on her subsequent election as Vice Chair.

On the issues for discussion at this year's summer school:

Asylum seekers;

The decision by the Government to opt into the EU Reception Conditions Directive and to grant [access to the labour market](#) for eligible international protection applicants from today – 29 June 2018 is a very significant one.

This has been a longstanding demand for Congress and has the potential to allow for the estimated 3000 people awaiting a first instance decision on their asylum application to live in dignity during this process. For those who succeed in their application it will be advantageous in their integration into our workforce and wider society.

It is a source of disappointment that people must wait for 9 rather than 6 months and that people who are appealing their decisions are not eligible. We will be hearing about some administrative barriers to overcome for people if they want to truly access work.

This group of people may well contain vulnerable people and it will be incumbent upon the authorities to ensure that any attempts by unscrupulous employers to exploit or discriminate against these new entrants to our labour market are stamped out.

Congress welcomes these people to the workforce and notes that the best way to ensure their experience is a positive one, and one that vindicates their rights at work is to be a member of a trade union. Our movement remains a diverse and inclusive one and looks forward to welcoming new members from this cohort. We look forward to hearing from Lucky about the campaign and also from the Belfast City of Sanctuary people tomorrow morning.

Agenda 2030;

Since last year's summer school Coalition 2030 has gone from strength to strength, with its main demands now being implemented by Government. The Coalition (which Congress is a founding member of) recently published its own report on Ireland's progress, highlighting the lack of progress on putting in place the policies necessary to achieving the UN Goals in Ireland and issued a release last week as Ireland reported on

its progress to the UN calling on the Government to do much more in terms of its implementation.

Coalition 2030 delegates were in New York last week attending and engaging in meetings and events around the High Level Political Forum, and we look forward to hearing a report from Valerie Duffy from NYCI later today. There will also be a very practical element to that session as you will be examining how to apply the Sustainable Development Goals framework to your trade union work. The note on [Agenda 2030](#) in your packs will be a useful tool for unions seeking to engage with this agenda.

Palestine;

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has played a key role in supporting the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2017 proposed by Senator Frances Black & the Seanad Civil Engagement Group with the support of Congress and other Civil Society groups.

The Bill was in the Seanad recently and passed second stage there - an important step in making it illegal in the Republic of Ireland to purchase goods and services from Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. I know that Senator Black attended a meeting of our Global Solidarity Committee in May and that many of you played an important part in lobbying your Fianna Fail representatives to support the Bill. The General Secretary and the Treasurer of Congress also met with Fianna Fail foreign affairs spokesperson, Niall Collins and Fianna Fail leader, Micheál Martin urging their support. Given

Oireachtas arithmetic, FF support for the Bill was crucial and trade union members across the country played an active role in lobbying their FF TDs in this regard, culminating in the parliamentary party declaring their support in advance of the recent vote.

We also briefed our Palestinian counterparts in the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) at last month's international Labour Conference and General Secretary, Shaher Saed, expressed his full support for our efforts in this regard.

No Israeli government has ever shown a sign of halting settlement expansion, a policy which has resulted in approximately 750,000 settlers living in the West Bank, many of them earning a living in various industries producing goods for export to the EU. The Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill is an opportunity to give concrete expression to the historical support for Palestinian rights in Ireland and is an opportunity to pave the way for third states to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities under international law and we will continue to do what we can to ensure its passage through the Dail. We look forward to hearing from Dr. Mona El-Farra, the Director of Gaza Projects of the Middle East Children's Alliance tomorrow. The session will also be a useful opportunity to discuss our Palestine solidarity work into the future.

ILO;

David Joyce and Patricia King represented Congress at the 107th [International Labour Conference](#) in Geneva last month. You have David's report in your packs and it was a special year for Ireland with President Michael D Higgins giving a rousing speech during the World of Work Summit on 7th June – in which he outlined why the ILO and Tripartism was so important in today's fractured world. (One of our Swedish colleagues suggested that it was the best speech at the ILO since Olaf Palme in the 1980s). 2019 marks the ILO centenary and there will be a series of events here to raise awareness about this crucial body in the international system.

Irish Aid consultation

Irish Aid recently launched "Transforming our World" a public consultation on Ireland's new International Development Policy. Among the priorities for transformation listed are inclusive economic growth, providing decent work and implementing national social protection systems in developing countries. Written responses are invited by August 23rd (we have sought some flexibility on this as I imagine many will be on holidays..) and there will also be public meetings around the country in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Sligo and Galway. Any views, please send them in for inclusion in a Congress submission.

Organising

Finally, I want to welcome Emily Paulin of the ITUC [Global Organising Academy](#), who will be speaking to us very shortly.

The upcoming ITUC Congress, Copenhagen, 3 to 7 December 2018, will discuss how Unions have come a long way in “Building our Power” since the last ITUC Congress in 2014. Clearly, an intensified organising collective effort is required if we are to have the level of influence needed to “Change the Rules” and build the kind of world we wish to live in! The success of such organising efforts is a prerequisite for effective trade union global solidarity work, or indeed any of our work.

I know that this event will prove to be a success. I wish to thank all the Congress staff (North and South) who have been involved in organising the event and commend them and the activists in all unions, for the important work that you perform throughout the year, work which makes a real difference and which gives a real meaning to global solidarity.