



# *inform* **contact**

## **NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS**

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### **GCTU CONDEMNS DOMODEDOVO ATTACK Statement by GCTU**

«Speaking for millions of its members, the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) extends its deep sympathy and condolences to all victims of the terrorist attack in Moscow's airport Domodedovo 24 January 2011, and takes compassion on their families, relatives and friends.

«We strongly and explicitly condemn such crimes, especially as they hit peaceful and innocent people. Inhuman acts like that cannot be justified, whatever their motives or goals.

«Trade unions in the CIS countries are convinced that the authorities of the Russian Federation will do their best to ensure that the real perpetrators, orchestrators and masterminds of this monstrous atrocity are found and brought to justice.

«We insist that exhaustive measures be taken to prevent new such

crimes endangering the sacred right of every human being to a safe life and a secure future.

«The GCTU calls on all trade unions in the world to join efforts in the fight against any manifestations of intolerance, xenophobia and extremism.

«It is only through joint action that the world community will be able to successfully defend human rights and freedoms, and gain the upper hand over terrorism, this new plague of our times».

### **GCTU SYMPATHETIC WITH JAPAN QUAKE VICTIMS**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 2011, in connection with the earthquake in Japan, the GCTU issued a Statement that reads as follows:

«The General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) affiliating national trade union centres of the 10 countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and 30 industry-based Trade Union

Internationals is deeply shocked at the series of earthquakes and resultant tsunamis that lately hit Japan causing a loss of many thousands of human lives, large-scale destruction of dwellings, industrial enterprises, infrastructure and public establishments, and threatening with nuclear contamination of part of the country's territory and the adjacent areas.

«On behalf of its member organisations, the GCTU extends its deep and sincere condolences and sympathy to all victims of this natural disaster, their relatives and friends, all Japanese workers and their trade unions who are mourning over the death of their dear ones, comrades, countrymen.

«The peoples of the CIS countries still keep fresh the memories of the Chernobyl disaster, and the earthquakes in Armenia and Uzbekistan. Our trade unions played a prominent role in alleviating their consequences, and from our own experience we know the real price of friendly words of support and solidarity in such a situation. It is with deep gratitude that we recall the moral and material assistance we received those days from trade unions, workers, experts, all people of Japan. Today we welcome the humanitarian relief being provided to Japan by CIS countries and other states of the world.

«The GCTU and its affiliates express solidarity with their counterparts – the Japanese workers and their trade unions, share their anguish over the irretrievable losses, and wish them a successful liquidation of the consequences of the ap-

palling natural disasters that have befallen their country, and a speedy restoration to normal life».

### **GCTU CONCERNED WITH LIBYAN DEVELOPMENTS**

*Moscow, 28 March 2011.* «The General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) representing more than 50 million workers in the CIS countries is deeply concerned over the dangerous developments in and around the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

«Both the civil war in Libya and the air raids into its territory by the Air Forces of several countries invoking the UN Security Council Resolution No. 1973 have reportedly led to casualties among civilians, and the demolition of dwellings, infrastructure, and non-military facilities.

«The GCTU appeals to all parties in conflict to cease the hostilities immediately and start negotiations that would ensure observation of the rights and freedoms of Libya's workers and people as recognized by the world community, and help restore the peaceful situation not only in that country, but also in the entire Middle East and Northern Africa area».

### **GCTU HOLDS ROUND TABLE ON MIGRATION**

The GCTU Commission for the Protection of Workers' Socio-Economic Interests and for Legal Issues held a round table 28 February 2011 in Moscow to discuss the involvement of GCTU affiliates

in the formulation of state migration policies and in the protection of migrant workers.

Representatives of the national trade union centres, the industrial Trade Union Internationals, the GCTU Executive Committee, the Eurasec Integration Committee, the ILO, the International Organisation for Migration, the CIS Council of Migration Agency Leaders, and scientists exchanged views on labour migration problems in Commonwealth countries and shared their practical experience with one another.

In his opening remarks, GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov said the problem of labour migration had become an urgent challenge of economic integration which he described as the first stage of planetary globalisation. To adequately respond to this challenge, early effective measures must be developed and appropriate provision must be made for financial and human resources.

As she presented the keynote report «Labour Migration: a New Challenge for Trade Unions in the CIS Countries», GCTU Deputy General Secretary Natalia Podshibyakina stressed the need to formulate the concept of a common migration space, and increase the impact of trade unions on the governments' migration policies.

The debate confirmed the urgency of the issue, and showed that the GCTU's affiliated and partner organisations were highly interested in the search for construction solu-

tions. Participants pointed to a number of major problems including the inefficiency of national legislations concerning labour migration law, the lack of a common migration space, the illegal migration, the language barriers impeding cultural dialogue, the violations of the principles of social partnership, the manifestations of xenophobia, and the absence of an evidence-based balance of labour resources in the countries.

The participants were unanimous that trade unions must do their best to prevent migration from providing a pretext for overexploitation of guest workers. Simultaneously, the employment of the population in the receiving countries must not be impaired.

Based on the outcome of the debate, the meeting adopted detailed Recommendations that will be published under a separate cover.

### **RUSSIA: UNIONS JOIN FORCES TO DEFEND MIGRANT WORKERS**

The leaders of the Trade Union Federation of the Sverdlovsk Region and the Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation (AHIK) signed a bilateral agreement on the protection of the rights of migrant workers from Azerbaijan employed in this Ural region of Russia.

Trade unions in the Sverdlovsk Region will protect the rights of labour migrants to decent pay, worthy work conditions, and secured health and safety. The guest workers will also be actively unionised.

The Sverdlovsk union leader Andrey Vetluzhskikh was confident that the region would continue giving preference to hiring national workforce. «We believe it important for us to fight for high wages for immigrants, because we want to stop the employers from recruiting cheap hands for the sake of economy, he explained. In this way, the equal rate of remuneration will make them hire primarily Russian citizens. On the other hand, decent pay and work conditions could help the region attract labour migrants in occupations requiring higher skills, such as personnel for health care establishments».

The Azerbaijani Diaspora in the Sverdlovsk Region currently totals almost 50 thousand persons, with 25-30 thousands of them living and working in the provincial capital Ekaterinburg.

A similar agreement is also planned to be concluded with AHIK by the trade unions of the Tyumen Region in Siberia.

### **BELARUS: FTUB RANKS GROWING**

Issues of organising were on the agenda of a workshop held by the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FTUB) for the leaders of its affiliated organisations 14 March 2011. The seminar was moderated over by FTUB President Leonid Kozik.

The workshop noted that in 2010 the ranks of the Federation had been augmented with 25 thousand

new members. When discussing the motives for joining trade unions, participants supported the firm stand of the FTUB That insists a single collective agreement being concluded at every enterprise, irrespective of the number of trade unions acting there. They proposed that the Labour Code be amended in what regards the collective agreement coverage of trade union members only.

### **GEORGIA: STRIKERS WIN IN TKIBULI**

A methane explosion shook the Mindeli coal mine in the town of Tkibuli 22 January 2011, killing one and seriously burning four workers. That was not the first accident in Tkibuli mines, over the last nine months alone, nine workers were killed there and dozens of others severely injured.

Indignant at the disregard of the employers for occupational safety, the miners called an indefinite strike on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, supported by the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC). Following the difficult negotiations that lasted many days, the company management yielded to all demands put forth by the strikers. The President of the Union of Workers in the Metallurgical, Mining and Chemical Industries and the company's General Manager signed an agreement to this effect.

According to the GTUC leader Irakli Petriashvili, the greater part of the agreement deals with occupational safety and health, payments for overtime, wage raises, and the im-

provement of the working conditions. He expressed the hope that the company management would no longer resort to intimidation and harassment of workers for their decisions to join the union.

## **KAZAKHSTAN WORKERS HOLD FORUM**

Kazakhstan's capital Astana was the venue of a national forum of workers organised 18 March 2011 under the slogan «Trade Unions and Workers Support Nursultan Nazarbayev!» About 300 delegates took part in the event, representing workers in various industries and social services from all over the country, members of Parliament, and the employers' unions.

Opening the forum, the leader of the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (FTURK) Siyazbek Mukashev said the country's President Nazarbayev had always supported the trade union movement, and the unions, in their turn, had consistently supported his strategic line for building a social state. Siyazbek Mukashev was confident that the over two million trade union members would vote for Nursultan Nazarbayev 3 April 2011.

The Forum stressed that, together with political parties and other public and nongovernmental organisations, the trade unions, as the core of Kazakhstan's civil society, bore special responsibility for the country's advance along the path of social progress, and for the maintenance of social stability and interethnic accord.

They had never kept aloof from major political events, and had always stood up for the respect of workers' legitimate rights and interests, for decent work and decent pay.

The Forum called on union members and all workers to vote for Nursultan Nazarbayev, for a Kazakhstan way to build a strong social state, for the solution of all workers' social and economic problems, and for genuine democracy and freedom.

## **KYRGYZSTAN: UNIONS & EMPLOYERS WILLING TO COOPERATE**

President of the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) Kanatbek Osmonov met with the leaders of the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Employers in Industry 25 January 2011.

The participants in the talks reached agreement on constructive cooperation in the spheres of developing health and safety services, regulating the labour relations at the country's enterprises through collective bargaining, and mobilising efforts to reduce informal employment.

The two parties also agreed to set up an Occupational Safety and Health Agency that will comprise safety experts from industrial enterprises and trade union labour inspectors. Their training will be provided by the trade union labour inspection.

The parties decided that such meetings should be held in the future on a regular basis.

## **MOLDOVA: UNION WOMEN DISCUSS CHALLENGES**

The Women's Organisation of the National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova (CNSM) held an annual meeting of its activists in Chisinau's House of Trade Unions 25 February 2011. The event is traditionally organised on the eve of March 8, the International Women's Day.

This year's meeting took place under the slogan «The Women's Organisation keeps the struggle against poverty under control!» More than 400 female representatives of all industrial trade unions affiliated to CNSM attended the meeting.

Leaders of CNSM and representatives of its Women's Organisation discussed the burning problems Moldovan women are facing in their lives and work, particularly those concerning employment, wages, working conditions, health care, and maternity protection.

«Ensuring social justice is a priority in trade union activity. Our Organisation seeks solutions for the protection of women's working rights, and signing collective agreements is one of them because they help us get wage increases, benefits, and so on. Ridding women of unfavourable working conditions is another major task for us», said Anna Selina, Head of the CNSM Women's Organisation.

Participants demanded that the lump-sum child birth benefit be raised at least to 5000 lei (roughly \$570) and the monthly child care allowance be also increased.

## **MOLDOVA: UNIONS REJECT MEAGER PAY RAISES**

The trade unions cannot accept a situation when an IMF delegation staying for a week in Moldova deliberately evades direct dialogue with workers' representatives despite the repeated requests from the National Trade Union Confederation (CNSM). A meeting of the unions with the IMF was scheduled for 11 February 2011, however, for some unexplained reasons it was cancelled by the IMF.

«The fact that the IMF has given the nod to some wage increases isn't bad news, of course, but the increases are miserable compared with the actual expenditures by the population and the prices of food-stuffs and basic services», said CNSM President Oleg Budza as he commented on the news that the IMF mission had approved of increasing teachers' salaries by a total of 25 per cent, in two stages (June and September 2011). Apart from that, by 1 April 2011 pensioners and low-income families will have received reimbursement for the heating season 2010-11 (about 390 lei, or \$44). The IMF has also accepted a 12 per cent rise in salaries for public employees as from 1 October 2011, and an 8.5 per cent rise in pensions for retired budget sector employees as from 1 July 2011.

Meanwhile, the unions had earlier insisted that the minimum pay in the budget sector should be raised in two stages: on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2011 from 600 to 900 lei, and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2011 up to the actual subsistence minimum level, which

today amounts to 1305 lei (\$148) a month. The CNSM also stands for pension increases, considering that over 90 per cent of pensioners currently live on 900 lei (\$102) a month, something that trade unions describe as a disgrace.

The Moldova trade unions believe it extremely important for the public to have free access to the full text of the agreement between the IMF and the Government of the Republic of Moldova, since, «the document may contain a lot of aspects, important to society and the nation, that might be concealed from the public eye, which is not acceptable»

### **RUSSIA: EXTRAORDINARY FNPR CONGRESS**

Six hundred ninety-three delegates took part in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) held in Moscow from 12-14 January 2011. Among the invitees were Prime Minister of Russia Vladimir Putin, representatives of government agencies and departments, Members of Parliament, representatives of employers' unions and political parties, foreign guests including leaders of the international trade union organisations, and a GCTU delegation headed by its General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov. President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev sent a message to the Congress participants.

The Congress agenda included an activity report on the implementation of the decisions of the FNPR

6<sup>th</sup> Congress, the approval of the Programme of Activity for the Period up to 2015; and the election of President and the steering and supervisory bodies of the FNPR.

In his brief report on the Federation's activity since the previous 6<sup>th</sup> Congress, FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov said Russia was facing serious challenges resulting mainly from the world economic crisis. He expressed the opinion that «the trade unions need a qualitative re-assessment of their activities» and presented some new approaches to the solution of the accumulated problems. «What we have in store for us is not just a lot of work, but also a struggle. But we are not afraid of struggles, since without a struggle there's no victory!», he concluded.

Addressing Congress, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin appreciated highly the role trade unions had played over the past five years, particularly in the times of the 2008-09 crisis. «I regard the unions as a reliable and, what is more, responsible partner. Our jobs are different, but our objective is the same, and that is ensuring a dignified standard of living for our citizens», he said in conclusion.

The Congress adopted a number of important resolutions on acute problems presently facing the trade unions and the economy of Russia.

FNPR has confirmed that decent pay giving the workers economic and social independence is the key element of decent work. The Congress called on trade unions to resolutely seek fair distribution of the work

results. The federal and regional authorities were urged to provide funding for programmes of improving the work conditions, protecting the environment, and enhancing occupational health and safety. The struggle for a responsible and well-balanced social policy to be pursued by the Government, and for restoring the trade union influence within the system of obligatory social insurance becomes a crucial task for FNPR and its affiliates.

Delegates discussed in detail issues concerning trade union organising, and set the priorities for trade union modernization. The Congress recommended that FNPR should strengthen its co-operation with trade unions of foreign countries, and with the international trade union movement.

Mikhail Shmakov was elected President of the FNPR. The session of the FNPR General Council held immediately after the Congress elected Tatiana Frolova, Nina Kuzmina, Andrey Isayev, David Krishtal and Sergey Nekrasov Vice Presidents of FNPR.

### **UKRAINE: UNIONS DELIVER ULTIMATUM TO IMF**

The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, FPU\*, has presented the International Monetary Fund with an ultimatum protesting against the latter's antisocial activities in Ukraine. The document reads, in particular, as follows:

\* At the request of our Ukrainian colleagues, we substitute the Ukrainian-based acronym «FPU» for the former English-based «FTUU».

«The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine demands that the IMF stop interfering in Ukraine's internal policy and imposing antisocial terms and conditions of crediting that ruin the social protection of population and spread poverty in the country.

«The trade unions are not against the Ukrainian economy getting financial support. However, the exorbitant credit terms that have nothing to do with repayment of the loan reveal the true aim of the IMF, which is to exert influence on Ukraine's internal social policy and reduce its social safety net.

«It was under IMF pressure that the Government had developed a draft of the so called pension reform and submitted it to consideration by the Supreme Rada (Parliament), whereby the retirement age for women will be raised by five years, the pensions of working pensioners will be frozen, and the rights of virtually all future pensioners will be sternly restricted.

«The Joint Representative Body of All-Ukraine Trade Unions have come to the simple conclusion: this is not a reform. The draft law aggravates the plight of pensioners, violates the Constitutional provisions, and, therefore, must be withdrawn from the Supreme Rada. The trade unions maintain with full responsibility that this draft is unable to solve the problem of deficits in the Pension Fund of Ukraine either today or in the future.

«We urge the IMF to abandon immediately its demands that the



Government should raise the retirement age for women and increase the length of the pensionable service by 10 years as a condition for providing loans to Ukraine.

«If this ultimatum is not met, the trade unions will launch a public campaign for the suspension of cooperation with the IMF and for the expulsion of its Office from Ukraine.

No to the violations of Ukrainians' pension rights!»

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2011, over five hundred FPU activists and representatives of sectoral trade unions of Kyiv and the Kyiv Region built a picket line outside the IMF office in Ukraine, involving many women and young people.

Speaking to the pickets, a FPU Vice President Serhiy Ukrainets said FPU demanded a stop to IMF interference in the internal policy of the sovereign Ukrainian state.

### **UKRAINE: FPU CONGRESS SETS PRIORITIES**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) was held in Kyiv's International Centre of Culture and Arts from 23-24 March 2011. More than 700 delegates representing 44 industrial trade unions and 27 regional trade union organisations affiliated with FPU attended the event. The invited guests numbered 54 leaders of international organisations and national trade union centres from 27 countries, including FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov,

GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov, and Ukraine's Prime Minister Mykola Azarov.

Congress heard and discussed the activity report presented by FPU President Vasyl Khara, and also the reports of the Control and Auditing Commission and the Statutes Committee.

Addressing the Congress, the Prime Minister of Ukraine supported the idea of a more efficient social dialogue, stressed the need for far-reaching economic transformations, and spoke in favour of production modernisation. Among the priority tasks facing his Cabinet, he mentioned the rise in internal demand and the increase in the production volumes that had dropped by 70 per cent over the last few years. Mykola Azarov devoted special attention to the controversial pension reform proposed by the government.

The Congress adopted a number of policy resolutions on such issues as decent work, social dialogue, development of the social state, the right to organisation, working rights security, youth, etc.

The delegates approved of amendments to the FPU Constitution, formed the personal composition of the FPU Council, the Control and Auditing Commission and the Statutes Committee. Vasyl Khara was elected FPU President for a new term of office, while Hrihoryi Osovyi, Serhiy Ukrainets and Serhiy Kondriuk were elected Vice Presidents.

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THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, GCTU, IS AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANISATION THAT WAS FOUNDED AT ITS FIRST CONGRESS ON 16 APRIL 1992.

ITS CONSTITUTION, WHICH WAS APPROVED BY THE FIRST CONGRESS, WAS AMENDED AND SUPPLEMENTED BY THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 22 SEPTEMBER 1993, THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 18 SEPTEMBER 1997, AND THE FIFTH (EXTRAORDINARY) CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 26 MARCH 2004.

THE BASIC OBJECTIVES OF THE GCTU ARE:

- CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' ACTIVITIES ON THE PROTECTION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS OF WORKERS, STUDENTS AND PENSIONERS;
  - ASSISTANCE IN THEIR PROTECTION OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES;
- AND
- ORGANISING TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY AND CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' INTERNATIONAL POLICIES.

THE GCTU BUILDS ITS ACTIVITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNISED STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, WITH FULL RESPECT FOR ITS AFFILIATES' COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE AND THE EQUALITY OF THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES.  
THE GCTU AFFILIATES NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTRES OF ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, BELARUS, GEORGIA, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN AND UKRAINE, AND ALSO 30 INDUSTRIAL TRADE UNION INTERNATIONALS.

THE GCTU IS READY TO CO-OPERATE WITH ANY OTHER NATIONAL TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR AFFILIATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

THE CONFEDERATION ENJOYS OBSERVER STATUS WITH THE CIS AND EURASEC INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLIES, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT, THE CIS INTERSTATE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, ETC.

INTERNATIONALLY, IT IS IN CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE ILO , THE UN DPI AND THE ECOSOC.

THE GCTU SUPREME BODIES ARE THE CONGRESS, CONVENED EVERY FIVE YEARS, AND, IN THE INTERVALS BETWEEN THE CONGRESSES, THE COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES IS EXERCISED BY THE GCTU AUDITING COMMISSION.

PRESIDENT OF THE GCTU IS MIKHAIL SHMAKOV,  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GCTU IS VLADIMIR SCHERBAKOV

## DEAR READERS

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